DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 442 603 RC 022 473

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TITLE	Field Test of the "School Study of Writing Instruction": A Self-Study Needs Assessment Instrument. A Product of the Kentucky State Project: Designing Professional Development for Portfolio Improvement. Study of Writing Instruction in Kentucky Schools.
INSTITUTION	AEL, Inc., Charleston, WV.; Kentucky State Dept. of Education, Frankfort.
SPONS AGENCY	Office of Educational Research and Improvement (ED), Washington, DC.
PUB DATE	1999-11-00
NOTE	189p.; For related documents on the "Study of Writing Instruction in Kentucky Schools", see RC 022 258 and RC 022 472.
CONTRACT	RJ96006001
PUB TYPE	Reports - Research (143)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC08 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Cooperative Planning; *Educational Assessment; Elementary Secondary Education; Evaluation Methods; Evaluation Research; *Needs Assessment; *Portfolio Assessment; Rural Schools; School Effectiveness; *Self Evaluation (Groups); *Writing Improvement; Writing Instruction
IDENTIFIERS	Facilitators; *Kentucky

ABSTRACT

One mandate of the Kentucky Education Reform Act of 1990 requires that students develop a writing portfolio. Ultimately, schools must elevate the average performance level of students' portfolios to the benchmark of "proficient." During site visits to 29 schools, 36 indicators were identified that differentiated writing scores and programs in continuously improving and continuously declining schools. The indicators were used to develop a self-study needs assessment instrument called the "School Study of Writing Instruction." Created as a handbook, the instrument enables a school to compare different role groups' perspectives on its writing portfolio program and to use the findings to set priorities and plan program improvements. This report describes the field test of the instrument in 11 schools across Kentucky. Most schools were in rural areas or small towns and served a primarily White population; the schools were otherwise diverse in terms of size, grade level, and Title I eligibility. Of the 10 schools completing the study, 9 found it to be a worthwhile experience that produced some successful outcomes. Steering committee members and principals offered helpful suggestions for improving the handbook. A comparison of schools that were or were not assigned facilitators suggests that facilitator services were highly beneficial. Overall, the instrument was found to be valid and replicable. The potential time investment may temper some faculties' motivation to undertake it, but facilitator assistance could ameliorate this factor. Appendices include parts of the instrument,

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evaluation materials, and findings for individual schools. (Contains 22 references.) (SV)

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Field Test of the *School Study of Writing Instruction:* A Self-Study Needs Assessment Instrument

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Study of Writing Instruction in Kentucky Schools

A Collaboration between AEL, Inc.
and
Kentucky Department of Education

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Field Test of the *School Study of Writing Instruction:* A Self-Study Needs Assessment Instrument

A Product of the Kentucky State Project:
Designing Professional Development for Portfolio Improvement

A Collaboration between AEL, Inc. and the Kentucky Department of Education

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November 1999

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This publication is based on work sponsored wholly or in part by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education, under contract number RJ96006001. Its contents do not necessarily reflect the views of OERI, the Department, or any other agency of the U.S. government.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background

One of the mandates of the Kentucky Education Reform Act (KERA) of 1990 is that students develop a writing portfolio (Kentucky Department of Education, 1990, 1998b). Ultimately, schools in Kentucky are expected to elevate the average rating of students' portfolios to the benchmark of *proficient*. To aid in this endeavor, the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) and AEL, Inc. (formerly Appalachia Educational Laboratory, Inc.) began a collaborative project in 1996 (AEL, 1997a). A collaborative research team composed of KDE and AEL staff was formed. The goal of this project is to help schools discern the areas for improvement in their writing programs.

In 1996, the collaborative research team planned a series of site visits to ascertain the indicators of quality writing programs. Through site visits to 29 schools, the research team identified 36 indicators that differentiated writing scores and programs in *continuously improving* schools from those in *continuously declining* schools. The indicators of successful writing programs address such issues as professional development, instructional strategies, administrative support, and family and community involvement.

Based on the indicators that they had identified during the site visits, the collaborative research team designed a needs assessment instrument called the *School Study of Writing Instruction* (AEL & KDE, 1999). This instrument, in the form of a handbook, enables a school to compare different role groups' perspectives about the writing portfolio program. This comparison is made available to the entire faculty for school-wide awareness and discussion. Eventually, the results are used to set priorities and plan actions for improvement of a school's writing program.

A pilot test of the *School Study of Writing Instruction* was conducted in the fall of 1998 (Parrish et al., 1999a). It was piloted in its entirety at one Kentucky school, which was offered a $1,500 stipend by KDE to complete the self-study. The *School Study* was successful for the pilot-test school, owing largely to the faculty's sense of ownership of the process. Also, the school deftly customized the *School Study* handbook to suit its needs. The outcomes of the pilot test contributed formatively to the field test and created the expectation of success in the field-test schools.

Describing the field test of the *School Study of Writing Instruction* (AEL & KDE, 1999) is the purpose of this report. The objectives of the field test were (1) to describe each field-test school's experience of conducting the *School Study*, (2) to assess the value of the self-study for schools, (3) to assess the level of external facilitator assistance needed to conduct the study satisfactorily, and (4) to assess the validity and reliability of the *School Study* handbook.

Findings: How the Field-Test Schools Conducted the *School Study*

The *School Study of Writing Instruction* was field-tested in 11 schools across Kentucky, and each school was offered a $1,500 stipend by KDE. Ten of the11 schools completed the *School*

Study to a logical interim point, and 1 school did not complete it. Seven field-test schools conducted the *School Study* within 6 weeks and 3 schools spent 7-9 weeks. According to responses from 43 Steering Committee feedback forms, each Steering Committee member spent an average of 13.5 hours on the study; about one fourth of these 43 respondents contributed more than 20 hours each.

There were several telling similarities and differences in how schools orchestrated the *School Study*, which contributed formatively to the collaborative research team's production of the final version of the handbook.

First, the research team discovered that 3 of the field-test schools included interview data and faculty input from a feeder school in their self-studies, a wise strategy for increasing the impact of the study beyond their individual schools.

Most schools were able to complete step 1, the interviews, in 2-3 days. Almost all schools solicited more than one interviewer to complete the task. Yet administrators or faculty members on the Steering Committee frequently conducted interviews themselves, rather than delegate the responsibility to individuals outside the school. At just 5 of the 10 schools did Steering Committees identify only external individuals for interviewing, usually parents or facilitators.[1] Several schools interviewed more teachers and students than suggested, demonstrating their interest in obtaining meaningful results from the study. Upon reflection, most Steering Committee members stated that the interviews were the most helpful part of the *School Study* because the comparison between teacher and student interview responses was revealing.

Several schools' Steering Committees wrote the report on their writing program, step 2, during a meeting rather than individually. This caused the collaborative research team to modify the handbook by including a recommendation to write the report in a meeting setting. Report writing was identified by Steering Committee members as the most time-consuming task of the school study process, the average time spent per person being 4-5 hours.

Most field-test schools constructed the rating meeting, step 3, in faculty small groups as outlined in the handbook. Three of the 10 schools invited faculty to the meeting on a voluntary basis and consequently reported low attendance. Thirty-five of 45 Steering Committee members and principals, representing a majority in 8 of the 10 schools, thought that the school profile developed at the rating meeting was mostly an accurate picture of their writing program. However, faculties at a few schools voiced dissension with the school profile results during discussion.

Steering Committees at most of the 10 schools assigned step 4 responsibilities, priorities and planning, to a committee or combination of committees; Steering Committees at 2 schools assigned them to the entire faculty. By the end of the 1998-99 school year, 4 schools had already begun step 4 with some creative plans in mind, such as hiring writing faculty and involving students in a community project using their writing skills. All 10 field-test schools that carried the study to a logical interim point reported the intention to complete step 4 activities in the 1999-2000 school year.

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[1] Moreover, it was not intended that facilitators be asked to conduct interviews. It was hoped that schools would find it easier to identify other external agents, such as parents and community members, to perform this task.

Findings: Need for Facilitator Assistance

The field test was deployed in two conditions of schools—5 facilitated schools (Condition 1) and 6 independent schools (Condition 2). Facilitated schools (FSs) had access to a facilitator to guide them through the study in person and independent schools (ISs) had access to a contact person for telephone consultation.

Facilitators provided facilitated schools such services as

- prompting initiation of a school's study
- leading an introductory meeting of the Steering Committee
- selecting interviewee samples
- training interviewers
- interviewing
- facilitating report-writing and rating meetings

Typically, contact persons provided these services to independent schools only by request. Therefore, as intended and expected, facilitated schools received more of these services than independent schools.

Certain aspects of conducting the *School Study* were compared between FSs and ISs to determine whether having a facilitator made a difference in schools' efficacy to complete it. It was found that FSs were more likely to share responsibilities evenly among Steering Committee members, to write the school report in a Steering Committee meeting (rather than individually), and to have high faculty attendance at the rating meeting. Whereas, ISs were more likely to initiate their study without prompting and to proceed to planning actions (the last step of the study) before the close of the 1998-99 school year. In sum, facilitated schools appeared to conduct the study more efficaciously than independent schools, although some ISs may have initiated and concluded the study more efficiently than FSs.

When asked to reflect on how much facilitator or contact person assistance they required to conduct the *School Study*, Steering Committee members had an interesting response. Respondents from FSs named only those tasks for which they had received help and named none for which they had not. Likewise, respondents from ISs named no specific tasks for which they would have appreciated help. These findings mean that Steering Committees did not perceive a need for assistance beyond what they had already received, demonstrating an exemplary sense of efficacy to conduct the study.

Nevertheless, the collaborative research team maintains that facilitator assistance is advantageous and preferable, based on the consideration of all outcomes. First, FSs gave favorable appraisals of the help they received from facilitators. Second, despite their overall perception, Steering Committee members at some ISs did request facilitative services from their contact person. Third, Steering Committee chairpersons at a few ISs had to act as quasi-facilitators, assuming more responsibility than their counterparts at FSs, because they did not have the services of a facilitator (and chose not to request such services from their contact person).

Fourth, the research team identified various errors in field-test schools' conduction of the study. These include failing to gain faculty buy-in before starting, choosing interviewers from within the school, interviewing teachers or students in writing, not probing students for fuller responses, not dividing Steering Committee duties evenly among members, not enlisting helpers for typing, not requiring faculty to attend the rating meeting, and forgetting to do a step in the study. Both FSs and ISs were as likely to experience some of these difficulties in implementation, yet ISs were more likely to originate others that may have been averted with facilitator help. For the four reasons enumerated, the provision of facilitator services has been deemed highly beneficial and desirable for future schools undertaking the *School Study*.

Findings: Value, Validity, and Reliability

The greatest testimony to the value of the *School Study of Writing Instruction* was the positive assessment by the majority of participants. Of the 10 schools that finished the study, participants at 9 schools found it to be a worthwhile experience that produced some successful outcomes; participants at 1 school held an unfavorable opinion of the experience. Looking at the results by individual responses: of 47 principals and Steering Committee members, 34 said the study was worth the effort and 6 chose to reserve their assessment until they witnessed changes in the writing program as a result of the study. Only 7 respondents said that it was not worth the effort, 5 of these coming from the 1 school with the negative experience.

When asked how the *School Study* would benefit or affect the school, principals and Steering Committee members most frequently responded that writing programs would henceforth become more collaborative with revitalized participation by writing nonaccountable teachers. The next most frequent response was a general statement of raised awareness among faculty or a general reference to (unspecified) changes in writing programs.

Steering Committee members and principals offered several helpful suggestions for improving the *School Study* handbook, most relating to the interviews step. Mainly, they identified errors that made it difficult to transpose interview data to the report and rating form (i.e., a few of the 36 indicators were missing from the report and rating forms). Also, about one fifth of respondents recommended that a better time of year than late spring be designated for conducting the study. As another quality assurance measure, the collaborative research team performed a reliability assessment on the reports that schools wrote. It was found that, overall, reports were not exceptionally thorough. Revisions were made to the *School Study of Writing Instruction* handbook to minimize the likelihood of future occurrences of these various concerns.

Overall, the *School Study* is evaluated as being valid and replicable. The potential time investment required to complete the study could temper some school faculties' motivation to undertake it. Yet the provision of facilitator assistance could help ameliorate this factor as well as benefit schools in other ways. The *School Study* is recommended for ongoing implementation in Kentucky and other schools.

INTRODUCTION

One of the mandates of the Kentucky Education Reform Act (KERA) of 1990 is that every student develop a writing portfolio for which he/she is accountable at the 4th, 7th, and 12th grades (Kentucky Department of Education, 1994b, 1996, 1999). Coincident with this mandate, the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) developed a writing program. There are four benchmarks of achievement by which students' writing portfolios are judged: novice, apprentice, proficient, and distinguished. Schools are required by KERA to achieve an average of *proficient* on students' writing portfolios by 2010. Since the inception of KERA, teachers have found it possible to move students from novice to apprentice, but more formidable to maneuver them to the next benchmark of proficient. Presently, many students at varying degrees of mastery have been appraised at the apprentice level. (Some teachers have voiced concern that the range of mastery within the apprentice benchmark is too wide. They feel that many students deserve to be evaluated at a higher level, and that intermediate benchmarks between apprentice and proficient should be created.)

In 1996, KDE and AEL, Inc. (formerly called Appalachia Educational Laboratory) began a collaborative project to assist teachers in writing instruction and, ultimately, to improve their students' writing portfolio scores (AEL, 1995, 1997a). The project, titled the Kentucky State Project: Designing Professional Development for Portfolio Improvement, shall be hereafter referred to as the *Kentucky writing project* or *project*.

The Kentucky writing project was conceived as an applied research and development effort. Prior to the inception of the project, approximately 100 Kentucky schools were identified as having shown consistent gains in writing portfolio scores between 1991-1994 (AEL, 1995). Furthermore, although some have criticized the writing portfolio scoring process as being subjective, scoring audits showed that scores in these schools were more reliable than scores in less successful schools. To help less successful schools achieve these same gains, AEL and KDE were interested in a preliminary study to identify correlates of score gains in successful schools, possibly followed by the creation of new professional development materials and strategies (AEL, 1995). As stated in the project proposal, the original objectives of the research and development effort were (1) to establish correlates to gains in writing scores; (2) based on these correlates, to develop and field-test new professional development materials to improve both teacher writing instruction and accuracy in scoring student portfolios, implement the new materials in a training program, and disseminate the materials statewide and nationally; and (3) to determine the applicability of the new professional development materials to content areas other than writing instruction.

In the first meeting between KDE and AEL, the original objectives and activities of the project changed substantially (AEL, 1998). Focus converged on the first objective, that of identifying correlates of writing score gains, later termed *quality indicators* or *indicators*. The second and third objectives of designing new professional development were put on hold, because key decision makers at KDE agreed that preliminary research into correlates of gains required in-depth attention. First, KDE staff proposed that advancing students to the proficient level requires a different set of teaching strategies than those sufficient for getting students to the apprentice level (AEL, 1998). Second, KDE hypothesized that perhaps variables in addition to professional development and teaching strategies were decisive factors in successful schools' continual improvement. Third, KDE believed that the professional development already being provided was of good caliber: it was schools' level of participation in, not the content of, professional development that differentiated schools' writing programs and performance. For these reasons, KDE decision makers were wary of prematurely designing new professional development materials as a quick fix for declining schools.

The initial proposal stipulated that interviews with various school stakeholders would be performed in a few schools to develop appropriate interview protocols and to begin the process of identifying correlates of gains in writing scores (AEL, 1995). Once the interview protocols were refined, a broad telephone survey of successful and unsuccessful schools would be conducted in order to establish these correlates of score gains (and, conversely, the correlates of low or declining scores). However, the idea of a telephone survey was dismissed at the first KDE-AEL meeting in favor of a more penetrating scrutiny. Key KDE decision makers felt that the examination needed to be a more pervasive research project of on-site interviews than a telephone survey would afford. AEL staff concurred with this recommendation and also encouraged the inclusion of students as one of the stakeholder groups to be interviewed. Thus instead of the telephone survey, a series of site visits was planned for the purpose of identifying the correlates, or indicators, of quality writing programs.

At the second project meeting, the KDE Writing Program staff, the KDE regional writing consultants (then supervised by KDE, now by regional service centers), and various AEL staff formed a *collaborative research team*, also referred to as the *research team* or *team*. To identify the indicators of quality writing programs, the team decided to first make site visits to schools that were continuously improving in their writing program.

In preparation for site visits, the collaborative research team identified probable indicators as suggested by elements of Kentucky's writing program, wrote interview protocols based on them, tested the protocols during exploratory visits to 7 schools not in the intended sample, and then refined the protocols. For choosing the sample, the team created the designations *continuously improving* and *continuously declining* to define schools that met a certain criterion: continuous improvement (or conversely, continuous decline) in KDE writing scores over a 4-year period.[2] Next, the site visits for the purpose of identifying the indicators were made to 22 of 43 identified continuously improving schools.[3] Based on these activities, 34 indicators of successful writing programs were identified.[4]

Next, site visits were made to 7 of 18 identified continuously declining schools to discover how their writing programs fared relative to the indicators in comparison to the improving schools

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[2] If a 3-year period (the typical period of assessment in Kentucky) had been used, the pool of continuously improving schools would have numbered 100; however, the use of a 4-year period narrowed the pool to 43 schools (AEL, 1997a).

[3] Two of the schools in the sample later merged, thus changing the sample size to 21of 42 schools.

[4] Actually, 36 indicators were identified; however, two were inadvertently omitted from the field-test version of the handbook. Since the field-test schools were equipped to investigate only 34, this number will be mostly used.

(these 7 being different than the 7 schools visited during the initial exploratory visits). The differences in the scores between the continuously improving and declining schools were subsequently tested for significance; the score differences were found to be statistically significant on 33 of the 34 indicators[5] (see Appendixes A and B; AEL, 1997b; Coe et al., 1999a).

In sum, through site visits to a total of 36 schools, more than 100 teachers, 200 students, and 50 administrators were interviewed to help establish and verify the 34 indicators (AEL, 1997b). These indicators encompassed issues such as administrative support, writing program coordination, and family and community involvement, in addition to the expected salient issues such as instructional strategies and professional development.[6]

The strong emergence of a group of indicators related to teacher participation in professional development confirmed the wisdom of having earlier suspended one of the original objectives of creating new professional development programs. In testing these indicators, it was found that schools in which teachers had participated in professional development opportunities already available through KDE were more likely to evidence improved student writing than schools with untrained teachers. Thus the more salient need related to these indicators appeared to be increasing teacher participation in existing professional development, not revamping the programs themselves.

The second activity to emerge out of the modified objectives of this project was the development of a comprehensive needs assessment instrument. The instrument originated from the collaborative research team's earlier activities related to identifying the indicators; it was iterative in conception in that it grew out of using the interview protocols and writing the reports of findings from each school. While doing these activities, the research team (1) confirmed that talking to students was indispensable in evaluating a school's writing program and (2) decided that performing the tasks of the *School Study* would be a more valuable awareness experience for schools were they to do it themselves. The team envisioned an instrument whereby schools, led by an in-house faculty-based Steering Committee, could assess for themselves the strengths and weaknesses of their writing program relative to the indicators, with key operational elements being input from all school stakeholders and self- (versus external) evaluation. Thus was conceived and developed a *self-study* needs assessment for schools called the *School Study of Writing Instruction* (AEL, 1997a; AEL & KDE, 1999). Henceforth, it shall be referred to as the *School Study, self-study, study, handbook, manual*, or *instrument*. In accordance with the intent of KDE and AEL decision makers, the collaborative research team had designed an insightful approach for eliciting the voices of all school stakeholders, particularly those of students. This *School Study* is the instrument under consideration in this report.

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[5] The only nonsignificant indicator was *Evidence teachers write with students*. Its nonsignificance was attributed to two skewed means among the group of continuously declining schools. (As explained in Footnote 4, the correct number of indicators is 36: thus, to speak accurately, score differences on 35 of 36 indicators, not 33 of 34, were significant.)

[6] Only low, nonsignificant correlations were found between writing portfolio scores and characteristics such as class size, school size, number of grades, and socioeconomic status (SES) (AEL, 1998; Coe et al., 1999a). In other words, writing improvement does not bear a noticeable relationship to school structure or demographic makeup of schools. Thus, it is the actions that schools do or do not take relative to the indicators, rather than any unchangeable characteristics that schools possess, that formatively contribute to their improvement or decline.

In this report, attention is given to the prospect of providing external assistance to schools that may conduct the *School Study* in the future. Based on observations made during site visits, technical assistance emerged as a potential need for schools to successfully conduct the study. Because facilitator assistance was deemed beneficial in the pilot test, two conditions of such assistance were employed in the field test to further gauge this need: 5 schools were assigned a *facilitator* from the collaborative research team who would be regularly present and involved with a school as it performed the tasks of the study (facilitated schools) and 6 schools were assigned a *contact person* who would be available for telephone consultation (independent schools).

The remainder of this report describes the field testing of the *School Study of Writing Instruction* in 11 schools across the eight regions of Kentucky, selected to represent different grade levels, enrollment sizes, and geographic and demographic regions. Each school was offered a $1,500 stipend to be granted upon completion of its self-study. The field test concluded in the summer of 1999 and implications for the instrument's final implementation are considered. This instrument has the potential to be widely used to build schools' capacity for improvement in writing instruction.

Objectives

The four objectives of this report are to

1. describe each field-test school's experience of conducting the *School Study of Writing Instruction*

2. assess the value of the *School Study* for schools desiring to improve their writing program

3. assess the level of facilitator assistance required by schools to conduct the self-study satisfactorily

4. assess the validity and reliability of the field-test version of the *School Study* handbook for the purpose of improving the final version (AEL, 1997a)

Audience

The primary audience for this report is the collaborative research team of the Kentucky writing project: the Kentucky Department of Education Writing Program staff, the Kentucky regional writing consultants, AEL staff members assigned to the project, and AEL consultants. A secondary audience is the Kentucky State Caucus of the AEL Board of Directors, which acts as an advisory group to this project. Other audiences include those interested in needs assessment instruments, specifically school self-studies of curricular programs, and those interested in school writing programs.

METHOD

The method is divided into two conditions. In the facilitated condition, 5 schools were assigned a facilitator from the collaborative research team to lead them in the *School Study*. In the independent condition, 6 schools were assigned a contact person from the team to be available for telephone consultation. The data sources, participants, materials, and procedure are described next.

Data Sources

The data sources used to complete this report are described below.

Steering Committee Member Feedback form. A form of 11 questions accompanied the mailing of the field-test materials. The research team requested that it be distributed to each participant on the Steering Committee upon completion of the study. Questions related to time estimates for completing the study, the nature of planning activities, perceived need for facilitator assistance, and the utility of the study (see Appendix C). The facilitator assistance question was customized to each of the two conditions of schools. Forms were returned to the research team between late May and late June 1999.

Principal's Feedback form. A brief form of 4 questions also accompanied the original materials with the request that the principal complete it at the conclusion of the study. All questions centered on the utility of the study (see Appendix C). Forms were returned to the research team between late May and July 1999.

Phone interviews with Steering Committee chairs. The Steering Committee chair at each field- test school was contacted by a member of the collaborative research team and asked several questions regarding the performance of the specific steps of the *School Study* (see Appendix C for the interview protocol). Because a few schools were not finished with the study by the date of the first phone call, some follow-up calls were necessary. The phone interviews were conducted between mid-May and mid-July 1999.

Facilitator logs. Facilitators each kept a log of interactions with their assigned school(s) to track their progress in carrying out the *School Study*. Some contact persons (for the schools in Condition 2) kept a log as well, although they were not asked to do so. These were returned between June and July 1999.

Roundtable debriefing meetings of the collaborative research team. At two meetings in May and July 1999, near the completion of the field test and at its conclusion, facilitators, contact persons, and other members of the team shared their insights about schools' progress.

Phone and e-mail contacts with facilitators and contact persons. Members of the collaborative research team who did not serve as a facilitator or contact person communicated with those who did to check schools' progress and gather data.

Participating Schools

A pool of 12 schools was developed by nominations of the collaborative research team. The field-test nominations were purposefully selected from the eight education regions of Kentucky to represent different enrollment sizes, grade levels, and geographic and demographic regions (see Table 1). The research team was interested in discovering the *School Study's* utility in various school contexts because writing portfolio requirements apply to all schools. The Kentucky Commissioner of Education sent an invitation letter to the nominated schools, which included an offer of a $1,500 stipend, to which 11 schools responded.

Diverse representation is evident for most characteristics shown in Table 1 except locale type and race. (Location is more diverse than it appears given the geographic and education region demarcations of Kentucky.) Regarding locale type, most field-test schools came from small towns.[7] None came from the two largest locale types—a large city or an urban fringe of a large city—however, one was in a mid-size city. Regarding race, most schools came from a district with a majority white population. Although this sample is not extremely diverse in terms of locale type and race, it is believed to be to an extent that is representative of the state.

Table 1: Characteristics of the 11 Field-Test Schools

Enrollment **# schools**	Grade Levels **# schools**	Location/KY **# schools**	Locale Type[a] **# schools**	Race[b] **# schools**	Title I[b] **# schools**
0 - 300 **3**	PreK-6 **3**	North or NW **2**	Rural area **2**	≥ 95% white **8**	1 - 10% **2**
301 - 600 **4**	PreK-8 **3**	East or SE **6**	Small town **6**	88%W; 10%B **1**	11 - 20% **3**
601 - 900+ **4**	Middle (4-8; 7-8 gr.) **2**	Central **1**	Urban fringe of mid-size city **2**	80%W; 18%B **1**	21 - 30% **2**
	High (7-12; 9-12 gr.) **3**	Western **2**	Mid-size city **1**	60%W; 39%B **1**	31 - 50% **4**

Note. Read each column of data as a separate entity: there is no relationship between successive cells in a row.

[a] Data are from Burczyk (1998).

[b] Data are from *Quality Education Data* (1998). Percentages apply to the district in which each school resides.

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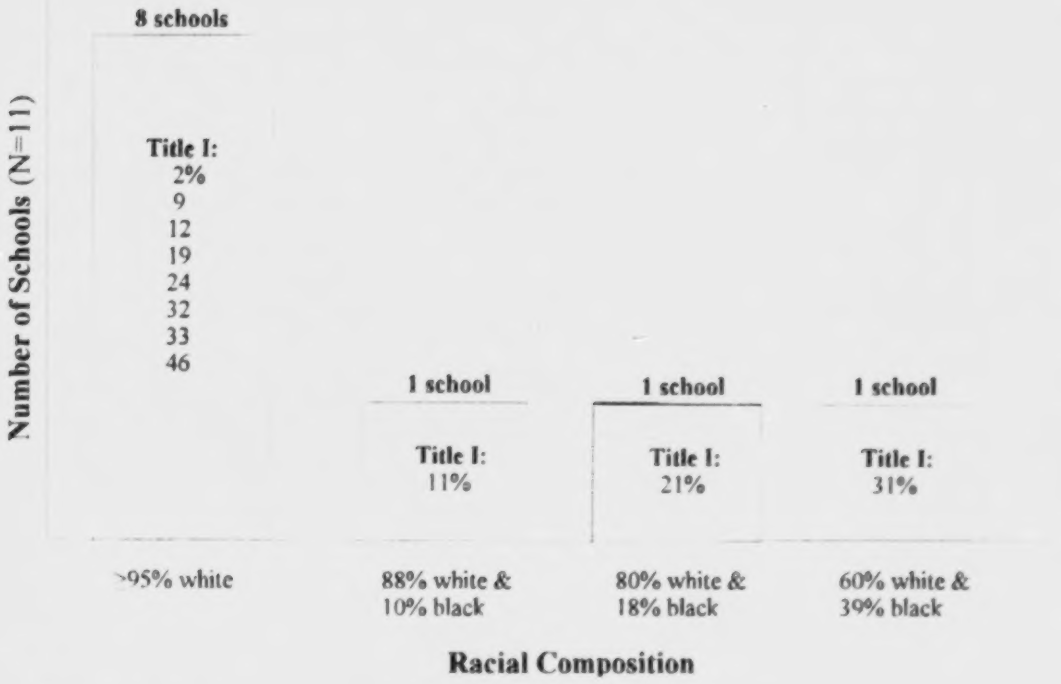
[7] These are Johnson's locale type definitions in abbreviated form (Burczyck, 1998):
A *rural* area has a population of fewer than 2,500 inhabitants.
A *small town* has a population of 2,500 to 24,999.
A *large town* has a population of at least 25,000.
An *urban fringe of a mid-size city* is a place within the metropolitan area of a mid-size city.
A *mid-size city* has fewer than 400,000 inhabitants and a population density smaller than 6,000 people per square mile.
An *urban fringe of a large city* lies within the metropolitan area of a large city.
A *large city* has at least 400,000 inhabitants and a population density of at least 6,000 people per square mile.

Figure 1 shows the latter two characteristics of Table 1—race and Title I eligibility—in relation to each other.

Figure 1: Depiction of Title I Eligibility by Racial Composition per School(s)



Note. Locale type data are from Burczyk (1998) and other data are from *Quality Education Data* (QED) (1998). Percentages reflecting race and Title I eligibility apply to the district in which each school resides.

Materials

Since the *School Study of Writing Instruction* (AEL & KDE, 1999) is new, care is taken in this section to describe it accurately. The study is a process divided into four main steps: (1) the interviews, (2) the report, (3) the ratings, and (4) the priorities. The interview questions, report topics, and rating categories correspond to the 34 quality indicators of improving writing portfolio scores. They deal with issues of administrative support, professional development, school climate, writing program coordination, focus on writing portfolios and writing in general, instructional strategies, family and community involvement, and assessment of the writing program's value for students. The interviews are the data upon which all subsequent analyses are based. They are the linchpin of the study; because they come from four different role groups (district administrator, principal, teachers, and students), they are a medium for closely comparing different parties' experiences and perceptions of the writing program.

Content validity of the *School Study* instrument was determined in two stages, each consisting of several steps. The first stage involved identifying the variables for examining writing programs (Coe et al., 1999a, 1999b). First, indicators were initially derived from the parameters of Kentucky's writing program (see KDE, 1994a). Second, the collaborative research team developed draft interview protocols around the initial indicators, tested them in exploratory visits to 7 Kentucky schools, and refined them. Third, the research team identified 43 schools with consistently improving writing scores and 18 with consistently declining scores. Based on site visits to 22 of the improving schools and 7 of the declining schools, in which more than 100 teachers, 200 randomly selected students, and 50 administrators were interviewed, team members established 34 indicators of successful writing programs (see Footnote 4 and Appendix A) (Coe et al., 1999a, 1999b). A comparison of the difference in mean scores between the 22 schools with improving scores and 7 schools with declining scores verified the indicators' capability to differentiate writing programs. These steps encapsulate the process by which the indicators were validated.

The second stage of establishing validity involved creating the *School Study of Writing Instruction* as a usable instrument for schools. First, it was designed around the indicators identified in the research stage. Second, it was designed in such a way to foster the involvement of several school stakeholder groups in studying a school's writing program, particularly the inclusion of students as informants of writing instruction. Finally, to enhance utility, the *School Study of Writing Instruction* was revised through several iterations based on meetings of the collaborative research team, on the pilot test, and on this field test.

The *School Study* handbook is a process manual in a three-ring binder. It includes an introductory overview and letter to the Steering Committee, as well as a section for each of the four main steps listed above. The forms for each step are compiled on computer disk. The overview includes a "Time and Task Summary" that provides estimated completion times for each of the activities in the four steps (see Appendix D). Confidentiality and the intention of in-house use of the information gathered are emphasized several times throughout the manual. The entire process as outlined in the manual is summarized below.

Engaging faculty buy-in and forming the steering committee. Before the study is begun, it needs to be introduced and supported by the faculty. If the faculty express a wish to undertake the study, a Steering Committee is formed. The Steering Committee is responsible for planning—and carrying out some of—the steps in the study, which culminates in a faculty-wide school analysis conducted during one or two meetings. The manual estimates "one month with focused attention" as the time frame for completion. The Committee is composed of at least four individuals. To ensure diverse representation, it should include at least one teacher who either leads the writing program or is portfolio-accountable, one who is portfolio-nonaccountable by virtue of the grade level that the person teaches (i.e., not 4th, 7th, or 12th grades), and one who is nonaccountable by virtue of the content area that the person teaches (i.e., a subject other than language arts). A parent may be included, preferably a member of the School Based Decision Making (SBDM) Council if one exists. If feasible, a community member possessing some familiarity with the writing program may be invited. After formation, the Steering Committee chooses a Chair.

Planning meetings and other preparation. Although implied that the Steering Committee would have to meet to plan the course of the study, no specific guidance is provided in the handbook about how best to accomplish this, except for periodic reminders to have sufficient numbers of relevant forms copied prior to the various steps in the process.

The four steps of the self-study process. A school's exploration of its writing program is a progression from interviews to a report to a rating session (and school profile) to setting priorities and planning actions. The purposes of the process are to highlight and verify the school's most distinct needs and to galvanize the entire faculty's interest in improving the writing program.

1. The Interviews. The interviews represent the data collection phase of the self-study. There are four role groups to be interviewed: students, teachers, the principal, and a district-level administrator. Depending on the size of the school, 10-14 students and 3-10 teachers are to be interviewed. These numbers for interviewee samples were designated based on their practicality (in terms of both time and data management), as established by the collaborative research team during the site visit phase of the project.

The Steering Committee is encouraged to select interviewees in the teacher and student role groups by stratified random sampling according to grade level(s) and content area(s). For the teacher sample, the school's writing leader(s) are automatically included. Then other teachers' names are drawn at random from various bowls. To ensure that a diverse sample is interviewed, teachers' names are distributed among different bowls before random drawing occurs, according to whether or not they are portfolio-accountable. A variety of content areas, grade levels, and tracks should be represented in the final sample.

Then the students are selected randomly, but *only from the classes of the teachers who were themselves selected as interviewees*. The student interviewees need to come from the classes of the teacher interviewees for meaningful comparison and contrast of responses about writing program practices. A range of numbers representing the largest class is placed in a bowl. As a number is drawn from the bowl, the name corresponding to that number on the first teacher's roster is the student chosen to be interviewed. The next number drawn is matched to a student's name on the next teacher's roster, and so on. If a number drawn is higher than the number of students in a particular class, another number is drawn. Alternates are drawn in the event that a student interviewee is absent on the day of the interviews.

The principal interviewee is the/a school principal. Finally, the district administrator designated as the interviewee should be the administrator most closely involved with the writing program.

After selecting the interviewees, the Steering Committee recruits other individuals to serve as the interviewer(s) of the role groups. The interviewer(s) should not be well-known to the interviewees. Possible interviewers are teachers from other schools, district or regional staff, experienced interviewers from the community, or college students. Even middle or high school students from other schools may be selected to interview students below their grade level.

If the Steering Committee desires, two Committee members (versus the interviewer[s]) may conduct the principal and/or district administrator interviews. The primary benefit in doing so would be that the Steering Committee members could gain valuable insight into administrator perspectives; a potential disadvantage would be bias on the part of the interviewer.

The Steering Committee should train the interviewer(s) in proper techniques and confidentiality according to their level of interviewing expertise, helping with practice sessions or a few joint interviews as necessary. If possible, it is recommended that interviewers work in pairs, so that one person can ask the questions while the other records responses and operates a tape recorder. One of the most important instructions to interviewers is to read over the interview forms prior to conducting any interviews. Another major instruction is to avoid being repetitive—in particular, to avoid asking a question if the interviewee has already answered it via an unanticipated response to a previous question. Based on the experience of the research team during site visits, it is recommended that students be interviewed in groups of two or three and teachers individually. It was observed during these visits that students spoke more freely in the company of their peers than in individual interviews. Also, group interviews saved time. On the other hand, it was believed that teachers responded more freely in their interviews to questions about their practices and those of the faculty in general, because these interviews were conducted confidentially and individually rather than in groups.

In the pilot test version of the *School Study* handbook, the interviewer was given the option of providing teachers with the interview form and asking them to complete it in writing as if it were a survey in lieu of interviewing teachers orally. However, the pilot school Steering Committee decided against this option, speculating that teachers would deliberate too long and write responses too verbose for Steering Committee members to incorporate into the school report. The collaborative research team readily agreed with this assessment, since the team also had concerns about the ability to elicit spontaneous and valid responses in a timely manner were interviews given as surveys.

Thus in the field-test version of the handbook, the survey was designated as a last resort option only. An example of a last resort option would be providing a survey to a teacher only after several failed attempts to schedule a verbal interview due to time pressures and the realization that the absence of her/his interview was stalling the progression of the study. This option was not exercised during the site visit research phase or during the pilot test, for the reasons just discussed; however, it was retained as an option in the field-test handbook, with emphasis on *last resort*, as a means of preventing schools from adopting this method as a viable, efficient alternative to interviewing.

The interview form for teachers has 47 questions; for students and the principal, each 32 questions; and for the district administrator, 16 questions. The estimated time to conduct an interview is 30-45 minutes; one interview per 50-minute class period allows time for regrouping between interviews. The estimated total time spent by the interviewer(s) is 10-14 hours, depending on the number of interviewees.

The purpose of the interviews is to gain a comprehensive body of information for use as raw data. People from the four role groups answer questions pertaining to similar topics. The level of agreement within and among groups yields cardinal information about the sophistication and coordination of the writing program, which is then translated to the report in step 2.

2. The Report. The report, written by the Steering Committee, is a synthesis of responses from the 15-26 interviews (see Appendix E). On the report form, the 34 indicators are recast as *report topics* and grouped under 17 headings. Under each topic on the report form, space is provided for the response of each role group relevant to that topic, (i.e., for the report topic, "Family Involvement," what did the district administrator have to say? the principal? the teachers? the students?). As appropriate, some report topics call for the response of only some role groups, such as "Professional Development," which calls for the response of all groups except students. Also, a space labeled "Other" is provided under each topic for report writers to add salient firsthand knowledge that did not surface in the interviews. Because this exercise involves merging the information given by various individuals in the separate interviews, the interview data begin to form an integrated picture of the writing program at this step.

A large number of interview responses have to be incorporated meaningfully into a report (there are16-47 questions per each of 15-26 interviews); therefore, three aids were provided to field-test schools for writing the report.

The first aid was the *removal* of a data reference table called the "Table of report sections and data." The table had been included in the earlier pilot version handbook, designed to help link interview questions to report topics. However, the pilot test school had experienced difficulty using the table because question prompts were not listed in enough detail. Yet the research team had difficulty detailing them any further because (1) many questions applied to more than one topic and (2) whether they were relevant or not often depended on interviewees' responses. For this reason, the research team decided to test the possibility that Steering Committees might fare better without a table of question prompts. Therefore, the table was removed for the field test.[8]

The second aid consisted of two sample reports intended to give report writers an idea of the report's scope. One sample was written by the research team; the other sample was the pilot test school's actual report, the pilot school having agreed that it could be included as a sample in the field-test handbook.

The third aid was a suggestion to compile the teacher interview responses and student interview responses. In the pilot test, the Steering Committee had devised an extremely powerful method for consolidating the interview data so that it could be manageably read and assimilated into the report: the Steering Committee chair typed all teacher interviews onto one teacher interview form, labeling responses, "Teacher 1, Teacher 2 . . .," and so on, and all student interviews onto one student interview form, distinguishing their responses in a like manner. In sum, 6 teacher interviews and 10 student interviews were compiled onto one form each (while the 1 principal interview and 1 district administrator interview were each left as is); this meant that only 4 interview forms, instead of 18, had to be consulted by report writers (i.e., the aggregated teacher interview, aggregated student interview, principal interview, district administrator interview). The collaborative research team valued this as a helpful outcome of the pilot test and so incorporated guidelines into the field-test version handbook for compiling interviews.

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[8] The table actually remained in the field-test handbook *in another form for another purpose*—that of dividing and assigning report sections among report writers. But the question prompts had been removed, so the table no longer served the purpose of linking topics to interview questions.

To help the Steering Committee divide report writing among themselves, the 34 report topics are divided among 8 sections (see Footnote 8). It is recommended that no Steering Committee member be assigned more than 2 sections to prevent any one individual from receiving a burdensome share of the task. If necessary, the Committee can enlist other faculty to join in writing the report. The handbook instructs the report writers to first scan each interview (or compiled interview) in its entirety and then answer each report topic. It suggests that each report topic response should summarize the common view and note any divergent views.

The guidelines predict report writing to be the step that takes the most time for the Steering Committee. The estimated time is 1-2 hours for two report sections; thus the estimated cumulative time spent by all writers is 4-8 hours. The manual suggests that when Committee members finish their assigned sections, they consider hiring someone or soliciting a volunteer to type the complete report.

The purpose of the report is to create a portrait of the school's writing program that highlights strengths, weaknesses, consistencies, and inconsistencies. In the indicator identification phase of this project, the team found that high consistency among role groups' responses to interview questions was prevalent in improving schools (AEL, 1997b). Conversely, the team expects incongruous responses within and among role groups to reveal the tenuous elements of a school's writing program. Student interviews especially are integral to uncovering problematic elements: their customer experience of the writing program *compared to* teachers' descriptions likely reveals more than just descriptions given by teachers and administrators.

3. The Ratings. The full faculty is convened by the Steering Committee to produce the school's ratings, which are based on the report. A few days prior to the meeting, the Steering Committee (or clerical helpers) will copy and distribute the completed report to all faculty, requesting that they read it before the meeting.

At the meeting, faculty are divided into groups of three to five participants. Smaller schools may have only two individuals per group; the number per group should not exceed five, even in larger schools, to better insure the likelihood that everyone will contribute. The small group size of three to five individuals was determined by the research team based on their collective experiences as educators and facilitators. The groups should be interdisciplinary, mixed by department and grade level, so that substantive cross-discipline discussions of writing can occur. To the degree possible, each group should include a language arts or writing program knowledgeable person. Each small group then chooses a group leader and a recorder.

Four documents are used to mark ratings:

a. the report, which each individual has brought with her/him (Appendix E)

b. a rating guide, excerpts of which are given to each individual according to the sections assigned to each group (Appendix F)

c. a blank rating form, given to each individual (Appendix G)

d. a blank school profile (Appendix H)

The rating guide describes schools operating at high, medium, and low performance for each of the report topics on a 3-point Likert-type scale derived from site visits, and includes authentic field-based examples. The rating form consists of a 7-point Likert-type scale per topic ranging between low and high. Finally, the school profile is a bar graph representation of the rating form results.

Prior to faculty breaking into small groups, the Steering Committee briefly entertains questions about the report. Then the method for rating the topics is explained, including how to resolve discrepant ratings and reach consensus. In the manual, this exercise in discussing differences is strongly emphasized as a means in its own right for facilitating better understanding of the writing program among staff.

For rating purposes, the report is divided into sections equal to the number of small groups. Once in groups, participants read the examples in the rating guide, compare them to the corresponding topics in the report, discuss them, give a rating to each topic in their assigned section, and record the results on their rating forms.

If time allows, the meeting leader can read each group's ratings aloud so that everyone can complete her/his form and discuss the ratings as a whole group. Each group should be prepared to discuss its findings, particularly the topics on which group members had difficulty reaching consensus. If there is no time left, the Steering Committee will develop the school profile based on the composite ratings and distribute a copy to everyone. If the Steering Committee has decided that the full faculty (versus a committee) will set the writing program priorities, the next meeting should be announced. Based on the experience of the pilot test school, the estimated time for the rating session is 2-3 hours.

The explicit purpose of the faculty rating session is to apply a quantitative interpretation to the qualitative analysis given in the report so that it can be more easily condensed into a parsimonious visual representation of the data. The implicit, yet more important, purpose is to fully engage faculty in discussion of their writing program.

4. The Priorities. This step is comprised of two activities: setting priorities and planning actions. The Steering Committee may choose one of two groups to set the school's priorities—either a designated committee, such as the School Consolidated Planning Committee, or the full faculty. Whichever option is chosen, requisite materials include the completed school profile, the report, the rating guide, and guidance questions for targeting indicators as improvement priorities. If the committee option is chosen, committee members receive additional guides such as examples of effective practices from other Kentucky schools and the Resource Inventory completed by the principal.

If the faculty option is chosen for setting priorities, the Steering Committee schedules another faculty meeting. At the meeting, faculty break into cross-content, cross-grade groups of five to further reinforce the practice of faculty from all disciplines and grades taking responsibility for the writing program. They are instructed to target one to three indicators for improvement. Each group's choices are reported to the whole body and displayed on large paper. Next, weighted voting takes place, with each participant placing between one and three adhesive dots beside their top priorities. For instance, each participant receives three dots; they could place all three of their dots by one indicator or place one dot each by three different indicators. The three indicators with the most dots are selected as priorities.

Whether a committee or the faculty sets priorities, participants should base their judgments on the data and guidance materials. The manual gives suggestions about how to make informed decisions in targeting priorities. The main suggestion is to target indicators that are most meaningful to the school, rather than the lowest-rated indicators just because they are the lowest. Two completed school profiles, one an average of the continuously improving schools studied and the other an average of the continuously declining schools, are supplied in the manual for reference; they are not intended for use as standards by which to target priorities for a specific school.

For the second part of step 4, planning actions, the handbook recommends that a designated committee such as the School Consolidated Planning Committee fulfill this task. The committee plans actions based on the priorities set by them or the faculty, using any relevant materials mentioned previously.

Setting priorities and planning actions are the culmination of the *School Study*. Their purpose is to give direction to improving the writing program.

Procedure

Two copies of the *School Study of Writing Instruction* handbook were mailed to each of the 11 schools that had agreed to participate, along with a version on disk in WordPerfect 8.0, in late January 1999. The materials were accompanied by an introductory letter from the research team to the principal. As an incentive to field test the instrument, a stipend of $1,500 was provided by KDE to each school. Also, a letter detailing procedures was mailed to facilitators and contact persons.

Six KDE writing consultants (members of the collaborative research team) were assigned among the 11 field-test schools to serve as either facilitator or contact person, each assigned to one or two schools in her region. Five schools had a facilitator, who would be regularly present and involved with guiding the study (Condition 1, facilitated schools), and 6 schools had a contact person, who would be available for telephone consultation (Condition 2, independent schools). Facilitators and contact persons began calling their assigned schools in late January 1999 to set up meetings or to answer schools' questions and check their progress regularly. During and at the conclusion of the field test, feedback was gathered from field-test participants via the several data sources described earlier.

Each field-test school's experience of conducting the *School Study* was assessed on whether or not it produced some successful results. In this report, *successful results* means that (1) a school completed the study to a logical interim point with adequate attention given to at least the first three steps, (2) a majority of principals and Steering Committee members found the study to be a worthwhile experience, and (3) principals and Steering Committee members anticipated benefits or changes to the writing program as a result of doing the study. The quality of the methods used by a school to carry out its study was not judged relative to successful results; however, the suitability and quality of schools' methods are discussed. Also, some schools experienced factors such as attrition by Steering Committee members and less than total faculty participation at the rating meeting; however, these factors were not counted against the success of these schools because doing so would negate the accomplishments of the individuals who did participate.

In addition, some schools gave permission for their findings to be reviewed by the research team so that a reliability assessment of the *School Study* handbook could be made. Specifically, the interviews and report were requested from each school for use in assessing how efficaciously field-test schools transcribed interview data to the report. A sample of 5 of the possible 34 report topic responses was assessed, the same 5 per each report (topics 9A-E). Accuracy, breadth of data items considered, and level of detail were the main criteria for comparison. A point system was devised for measuring these criteria: as long as a response accurately included most relevant data items, it was considered *entirely or approximately equivalent* to the reviewer's comparison sample (and thus, representative of the data being measured); if a response accurately included 30-67% of data items, it was rated *partially equivalent* to the reviewer's sample (i.e., partially representative); a response including fewer than 30% of the data items was considered *barely equivalent* (i.e., barely representative).

SUMMARIES BY FIELD-TEST SCHOOL

This section provides a synopsis of each field-test school's experience with the *School Study of Writing Instruction*. For the expanded findings, refer to Appendix I.

Condition 1: Facilitated Schools

The 5 schools described next were each assigned an external facilitator from the collaborative research team to guide them through the *School Study* process.

Facilitated School #1

FS1 was motivated to conduct the *School Study* and achieved some successful results. The school spent 9 weeks on the study, about twice the amount of time projected, and Steering Committee members each spent approximately 10 hours, reporting that interviewing and report writing took the most time. The facilitator observed that Steering Committee members prepared well for their meetings and tasks throughout the study process. Two members of the Steering Committee, the assistant principal and a parent, plus another parent not from the Steering Committee, conducted interviews; some teacher surveys were employed and students were interviewed mainly in groups. Also, FS1 included individuals from its feeder school in its interview sample. The Steering Committee chose to write the report together in a meeting rather than work separately. For the rating meeting, the Committee developed a reflection form for gathering faculty feedback about the study process. According to responses on this form, faculty learned that teachers and students in the school had different understandings of the writing program. Two Steering Committee members echoed this finding, saying that this realization was the most helpful aspect of the study process. Faculty also reported learning that assistance for and collaboration with content area teachers outside language arts were pressing needs, and identified several other needs as well.

Facilitated School #2

FS2 completed its study in 5 weeks. Overall, FS2 reported having a negative experience with the *School Study*. The principal did not participate, and the Steering Committee chair reluctantly accepted the position of chair. The Steering Committee chair ended up doing a substantial amount of the interviewing, report, and compilation work (40+ hours total). Neither did the encouragement of the Highly Skilled Educator (HSE) seem to fortify the Steering Committee's motivation. Despite the availability of an external facilitator, the Steering Committee did not contact her for assistance beyond what services were offered. The purpose for doing the school study did not appear to be understood by the Steering Committee or faculty. The Steering Committee and faculty meetings began late and in a state of unpreparedness. Members of the Steering Committee reported that they would have liked a longer period of time (and more resources) in which to carry it out. Some teachers were interviewed via survey rather than via verbal interview. Various Steering Committee and faculty members' assessments of the teacher and student interviews were that teachers' responses were generally not representative, while students' responses were. The majority of Steering Committee members felt that the school study was a waste of time. The principal's feedback stated that the study was worth the effort, in marked contrast to the majority opinion of the Steering Committee.

Facilitated School #3

FS3 completed its school study in 6 weeks with some successful results. The study commenced at the prodding and initiative of the facilitator and in some confusion. The school principal had formed the Steering Committee without informing designated members of its purpose; however, once the Steering Committee understood and undertook its work, the study gained momentum and organization. Two drawbacks to the Steering Committee's progress were that (1) the principal did not participate and (2) two Steering Committee members did most of the work (due to a combination of their own volition and perceived expectations of them). The Steering Committee never contacted the facilitator beyond what services were offered; the facilitator initiated all contacts and assistance. The facilitator was involved in some way at every step of the study process, including conducting a few interviews and facilitating the rating session. The Steering Committee was reluctant to engage interviewers from outside the school, so 2 of the members conducted the bulk of the interviews while the facilitator performed the remainder. They found that interviewing students in groups of 2-3 worked well; however, it was sometimes necessary to rephrase questions so that students could understand them. Because the faculty in the rating session believed that the interviews and report did not accurately reflect their writing program, they had difficulty reaching consensus. The facilitator reported that, nevertheless, the discussion produced some shared understandings.

Facilitated School #4

FS4 completed its school study in 5 weeks. Although FS4 experienced a delay of several weeks in beginning the study, the school completed it with some successful results. The principal participated actively on the Steering Committee; however, the study began in some disarray. Not all individuals had been notified of their designation to the Steering Committee or informed of the study's purpose before the first meeting. The Steering Committee was composed of 9 or 10 individuals, including at least one parent. The Steering Committee continued to exhibit some disorganization; no meeting was attended by all members and the Committee had to rush to finish by the end of the year given their delay in beginning the process. The facilitator was integral to starting the study on its course and active in several of the tasks involved. Several parents served as interviewers. One of the co-chairs reported that students sometimes had difficulty understanding interview questions. At the rating session, some faculty members expressed concern that parents perhaps were not the best choice as interviewers because they were not sufficiently knowledgeable of writing program jargon and, therefore, did not know when to probe students for more precise responses. Another obstacle in the interviewing task was that the district administrator refused to be interviewed, instead submitting only brief responses in writing.

The faculty rating meeting far surpassed the Steering Committee's expectations in scope. After rating, they progressed to discussion and reflections on next steps. The Steering Committee also held a meeting after the rating session to begin step 4 of the study process. Most Steering Committee members felt that the outcome of their self-study was worth the effort. Individuals' time spent on the study ranged between 2-18 hours. They listed the rating meeting, interviews, and/or report as the most helpful elements of the *School Study*. Compiling the report and meetings were the activities that required the most time.

Facilitated School #5

FS5 completed its school study in 7 weeks with some successful results. According to the facilitator, the assistant principal was a strong leader and assumed the position of Steering Committee chair. The principal also participated, and the Steering Committee and faculty were eager to do the self-study. The Steering Committee regularly availed itself of the facilitator's assistance even though Committee members believed that they could have conducted the study without such assistance. Nevertheless, they reported that the interviewing step would have been difficult to accomplish without additional help from other individuals, specifically finding the time needed to interview. Two substitute instructional assistants conducted the interviews as a pair. They interviewed students on an individual basis. Several participants in the study expressed the need for more teacher and student interviews for greater representativeness. To write the report, the Steering Committee worked together over a period of 3 days. The faculty-wide rating session was conducted as an entire group rather than in small group format.

Three of the 4 Steering Committee participants assessed that the outcome of the *School Study* was worth the effort; one said somewhat. The time spent by individual members ranged from 6-24 hours, various tasks associated with the interviewing step taking the most time. Despite the time required to do the interviewing, they ranked the interviews as the most helpful aspect of the study. The Steering Committee planned to involve the entire faculty in setting priorities for the writing program, although they postponed the meeting planned for the end of the school year to a professional development session before the start of the following school year. The facilitator predicted success for FS5 in following through with the study given the Steering Committee's promising expressions of intent and outlook.

Condition 2: Independent Schools

The 6 schools described next were each assigned a contact person from the collaborative research team to answer questions about the *School Study* process via phone or e-mail. The intention was for contact persons to be less involved with the study process than the facilitators would be with the facilitated schools' process.

Independent School #1

IS1 completed its school study in 6 weeks with some successful results. The principal chaired the Steering Committee and facilitated the study process. At the committee's first meeting, he presented the *School Study* handbook to the committee. He called the contact person once with a few questions; she initiated other calls to monitor the school's progress. The committee chose a parent to be the interviewer. The interviewers initially interviewed students on an individual basis, but switched to groups of 2-3, which they reported was preferable. The principal and 2 of the 3 Steering Committee members felt that the school study was worth the effort. The principal was appreciative of the opportunity to do it. Steering Committee members, aside from the principal, each spent between 7½ to 12 hours on the study, report writing being the task that required the most time. As a result of the rating meeting, IS1 planned to increase the participation of non-accountable grade teachers in the writing program. The principal expected that they would continue with the action plan in the next school year. One member expounded on a recommendation for revamping the format of the rating session, saying that it should have more closely emulated a workshop in which teachers modeled writing and left with a specific set of actions to implement or expect regarding the writing program.

Independent School #2

IS2 completed its school study in 6 weeks with some successful results. The principal was eager to do the study and reported being pleased throughout the process. The contact person initiated all calls to the school but one that came from the Steering Committee chair. Participants at IS2 had few questions. The Steering Committee was composed of 5 or 6 members and the writing cluster leader from the district office served as the chairperson. Due to the time constraints of others on the Committee, the chair organized the study and carried out most of the tasks herself. The chair interviewed students in groups of 4. To save time, teacher interviews were administered as written surveys. The Committee incorporated interviews of students and teachers from their feeder school in their data collection. Steering Committee members worked separately on their assigned report sections. Nonparticipation of non-language arts, content area teachers in the writing program emerged as the salient weakness in their program. The Committee convened a second faculty meeting for accomplishing the first part of step 4, setting priorities. Responsibility for the second part, planning actions, was given to a committee to be composed of the original Steering Committee plus a few other individuals. Before the end of the school year, the committee had incorporated new actions into their Consolidated Plan and hired a writing specialist. They agreed to complete planning during the summer before the start of the upcoming school year.

The principal and 2 of the 3 Steering Committee members who responded to the feedback form believed that the outcome of their school study was worth the effort. They found the interviews to be the most helpful aspect of the study process. Steering Committee members spent from 3 ½ -10 hours to complete the study (although the chair's estimate seems to be low given the amount of work she did), report writing being the most time-consuming task.

Independent School #3

IS3 did not complete the school study to the knowledge of the research team. Initially, it seemed underway and was scheduled to be finished by April 5. The contact person first called the school in January and called regularly thereafter to check its progress; she also visited the school twice and offered to help at various times. She initiated all contacts with the school. The assistant principal assured the contact that IS3 could progress unaided. There were apparently several extenuating circumstances that hindered the study's completion, including dissension from the SBDM Council.

Independent School #4

IS4 conducted its school study in 6 weeks with some successful results, although it had a slow start due to state assessment and faculty availability. The contact person spoke regularly to the principal before the study began; a few subsequent calls were not returned so she did not stay updated with the study's progress. The contact person and Steering Committee chair did not speak at any time, so the school conducted its study rather independently. The Steering Committee chair replacement was given the position late in the school year. Therefore, she hurriedly organized and orchestrated a substantial amount of the early work herself, having the completed interviews ready for the other Steering Committee members at their first planning meeting. Staff from the Family Resource Center interviewed teachers; higher grade level students from another school interviewed students; and the chair interviewed the administrators. The chair reported concerns regarding the student interviews such as interviewers not probing and interviewees not comprehending the questions. Faculty attended the rating meeting on a voluntary basis since it was held near the year's end; slightly more than 50% of the faculty participated. The session was productive, according to the chair; they had time for discussion, but not for completing the school profile. The noticeable effect of the study was heightened awareness by nonaccountable teachers of the need for them to participate in writing instruction. Completing the profile and setting priorities were slated for the following school year due to lack of time.

The principal and 2 of the 3 Steering Committee members believed that the school study was worth the effort. One was yet unsure. Committee members spent 6-11 hours each on the study, report writing taking the most time. They found the interviews and faculty discussion to be the most helpful aspects of the study.

Independent School #5

IS5 conducted its school study in 6 weeks late in the spring with some successful results, including germinal beginnings of a relationship with IS5's feeder school. Before the study began, the contact person's role changed to a facilitator's role by the principal's request. The contact/facilitator reported that the Steering Committee chair was initially uncertain of the study process and needed considerable assistance to get started. Also, the chair requested that the contact/facilitator perform all of the interviews because the Committee trusted her and knew that she was familiar with writing program jargon. Interviews from teachers and students at IS5's feeder school were included in IS5's data collection. The facilitator and scribe performed an unusually large number of student interviews (21) compared to the handbook recommendation (10-14). Moreover they interviewed most students on an individual basis because the scribe conjectured that students would respond more openly in that format. The report was scheduled to be written in a group forum to include several teachers from both schools; however, the chair wrote most of the report herself. The faculty rating meeting was planned for only faculty of the grades encompassed by the study from the 2 schools, instead of the entire faculty of IS5. Again, participation was a problem in that only 2 Steering Committee members besides the chair attended. By this time, several Steering Committee members had quit.

According to the chair, the study results verified what they had always known to be their program's main weakness—inadequate writing instruction in nonaccountable grades; thus the study gave them the evidence they needed to enlist the participation of these teachers to create continuity in the writing program. The rating group intended to use its report of preliminary priorities as a "springboard" for joint discussion among teachers of certain grades from the two schools at the start of the next school year, hoping ultimately for regular joint planning time to align the curriculum. The principal and 3 Steering Committee members were unanimous that the school study was worth the effort. Steering Committee members invested 4-34 hours each in conducting the study, the chair doing much of the work herself. The report-writing and rating tasks required the most time, and the interviews and dialogue at the rating meeting were the most helpful aspects of the study. Although step 4 of the study, setting priorities and planning actions, would not be finalized until the fall of the next year, the Steering Committee took initiative in engaging students in a promotional writing project during the summer.

Independent School #6

IS6 conducted its school study in 9 weeks with some successful results. The Steering Committee requested clarification on one issue during the course of the study. The Steering Committee included 5 members, who also served as the interviewers and were allotted 1 month to complete the task of interviewing. A problem arose in interviewing students, because one of the interviewers gave the interview form to a few students to complete in written survey form; these forms contained many non-responses. Also, the chair was disappointed with the depth of the other student interviews. Steering Committee members worked separately on their assigned report sections, each allotted 1 week for this task. One third of the faculty attended the rating meeting, which was concluded within 2 hours. Faculty did not engage in extended discussion after the rating activity was completed. Step 4 of the study was assigned to two committees in succession—first to the school's writing committee, whose recommendations would be forwarded to the Consolidated Planning Committee for finalization. The principal and Steering Committee members all felt that their school study was worth the effort. The time investment of individual Steering Committee members ranged widely from 6-50 hours, interviewing requiring the most time of members. They also found the interviews to be the most helpful aspect of the study.

RESULTS

The results are reported below relative to mostly the 10 field-test schools that completed the *School Study*. One school, IS3, did not complete a self-study; data concerning this school are discussed when available. Where appropriate, results are compared between facilitated schools and independent schools.

Initiation of the Study Process and Steering Committee Setup

Of the 11 schools that agreed to participate in the field test and began the *School Study*, 10 progressed to a logical interim point of completion by the close of the school year (usually step 3, the faculty rating meeting) and 1 school did not follow through in conducting the study.

The 10 schools that finished, even the schools in which a school administrator expressed eagerness in getting started, typically experienced a lapse of 4-12 weeks between the first contact with the facilitator or contact person and the first meeting of the Steering Committee, the average lapse being slightly over 7 weeks (*SD* 2.7). The delays were due to postponements by some schools and, less often, to the dilemma of identifying a synchronous date between the facilitator/contact persons' and schools' schedules. Individuals at 7 schools complained that the timing of the school study was poor (the spring) because they were busy scoring portfolios and conducting other assessments. Although all schools were equipped to begin the school study as early as the first week in February, only 2 began by the last week in February; had they started sooner in the spring, schools most likely would not have encountered a conflict with timing. Three schools—FS1, IS2, and IS5—expanded their study to include interviews of students and/or teachers of their feeder school in their data collection.

The Steering Committees of the field-test schools included 4-10 members to start, averaging 5.5 members per Committee (see Table 2). The facilitators of the 2 schools with a Committee of 8 or more, FS2 and FS4, thought that this number was too large. Also, facilitators or Steering Committee chairs of at least 3 schools reported that some members were not especially interested in participating or volunteering for tasks. In fact, 3 schools' Committees were formed and members designated by the principal without designees being adequately invited, or even apprised of their appointment and the study's purpose, until they were summoned to their first meeting with the facilitator. At least 7 of the Committees experienced some degree of attrition between the study's beginning and end due to work or personal conflicts; however, at least 3 acquired replacement members.

Table 2: Selected Aspects of *School Study* Setup by Field-Test School

	FS1	FS2	FS3	FS4	FS5	IS1	IS2	IS4	IS5	IS6
1. Original # Steering Committee Members	5	8	5	9 or 10	4	4	5 or 6	4	6	5
2. Some Steering Committee members chosen from role groups besides writing-accountable school staff	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
3. # Steering Committee planning meetings	3	2	3	4	3 or 4	4	2	1	1	2

Individuals who comprised the Steering Committees represented a variety of role groups, the majority being school faculty or administrators. At 5 of the 10 field-test schools that completed the study, either an assistant principal or principal was actively involved in the study as chair of the Steering Committee; at 3 schools, the principal was supportive, but not involved. At the remaining 2 schools that completed the field test, the principal was not involved or demonstrably supportive of the study process. All Committees included faculty members, 7 of which engaged writing nonaccountable teachers (those teaching in content areas other than language arts of any grade or in language arts outside of the 4th, 7th and 12th grades) as well as writing accountable teachers (language arts teachers of the 4th, 7th, and 12th grades). Of these 7 schools, 5 also engaged special staff such as the guidance counselor, Title I teacher, or instructional aides. At least 6 of the 10 schools invited parents to participate on the Steering Committee. Finally, 2 schools involved a unique member on their Committee—IS2 included its district writing specialist and IS6 included a recent graduate who was studying education in college.

Steering Committees held between 1 and 4 planning meetings in the course of the school study (excluding meetings in which they actually accomplished a step in the process, such as report writing or rating), the average being 2.6 meetings.

The Interviews (Step 1)

Almost all field-test schools (9) enlisted two or more interviewers/scribes to conduct interviews (see Table 3). Only 1 school, IS2, employed a sole interviewer. Steering Committees chose interviewers from a variety of role groups, but often from within the Committee itself instead of from outside the school as recommended. At 6 schools, some or all interviewers were administrator or faculty members of the Steering Committee; they were *primary interviewers*[9] in 5 of these 6 schools (see Table 3). At 1 school, interviewers were school staff (instructional aides) not on the Steering Committee. At 5 schools, some or all interviewers were parent members of the Steering Committee or other parents. At 3 schools, perhaps 4, the facilitator or contact person, or another individual in a facilitative role such as a Highly Skilled Educator (HSE), helped with interviews. At 1 school, IS4, some of the interviewers were Family Resource Center staff and some were students from a neighboring school, the latter group being an unconventional yet suggested choice in the *School Study* handbook. However, the IS4 Steering Committee chair reported that the interviews conducted by students were not successful. Six schools employed interviewers from a combination of these various role groups.

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[9] In this usage, *primary interviewer* means someone who interviewed teachers and/or students. An administrator or faculty member of the Steering Committee who interviewed only school or district administrators would not be considered a primary interviewer (i.e., as in 1 school, IS4).

In sum, half of Steering Committees reserved interviewing partially or wholly for themselves or school staff, which was recommended against in the handbook except for administrator interviews. Those associated with the school in an external capacity, such as parents, were acceptable choices; however, it was not intended for facilitators/contact persons to perform this function. In 2 schools, the facilitator's interviewing assistance was minimal, confined to administrator interviews; however, in 1 independent school, IS5, the contact person performed all teacher and student interviews aided by a parent.

Table 3: Selected Aspects of Interviewing (Step 1) by Field-Test School

	FS1	FS2	FS3	FS4	FS5	IS1	IS2	IS4	IS5	IS6
1. # Interviewers/Scribes	3	3	3	5	2	2	1	6	2	5
2. Primary interviewers chosen *only* from role groups external to the school				✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	
3. Time frame for interviewing (in days, except wks=weeks)	2	2	3 wks	7	2	10	2	7	7	4 wks
4. Students interviewed in groups	✓	✓	✓	some		some	✓			

Four schools accomplished the interviews within 2 consecutive days (see Table 3). Four other schools reported spending a few days time over a period of 7-10 days. Two schools spread the interviewing task over 3-4 weeks. The length of one interview was a typical 45-60 minute class period for both teachers and students, whether in group or individual interviews.

Schools interviewed from 4-12 teachers depending on the school population, in keeping with the handbook guidelines. At least 4 schools interviewed more teachers than suggested. Four schools solicited some or all teacher interviews via written survey rather than verbal interview . The Steering Committee chair at FS2 interviewed teachers in pairs, which was counterproductive for eliciting the most candid replies; she later complained of the unrepresentativeness of teacher responses.

Of 7 reporting schools, all interviewed more students than suggested in the handbook given their student population. Six schools interviewed 10-12 students and 1 school, IS5, interviewed a sizable sample of 21 students.

Interviewers at 4 schools interviewed students in groups of 2-4 (see Table 3). Interviewers at 2 other schools interviewed some students in groups and some on an individual basis. At 3 schools, interviewers conducted almost all student interviews on an individual basis. One school, IS6, administered some of their student interviews via written survey, which did not work well because students answered briefly and left many items blank. The interviewers' preconceptions of what format was most advantageous for engaging student interviewees determined whether they conducted group or individual interviews. Those who believed that group interviews would be preferable were borne out. Those who opted for individual interviews either found them to be ineffective or, to save time, switched to groups and found this method to be preferable. Written surveys were never a suggested option for student interviewees, and IS6's experience amply illustrated why.

It was not always clear who interviewed the principals and district administrators of the field-test schools. In some cases, the designated interviewer did and in others, the interviewees completed written surveys. At FS3 and FS4 in particular, each facilitator was asked to interview the district administrator because Steering Committee members expected uncooperativeness that they wished to personally avoid; in both cases, the district administrator refused to be interviewed but returned a written survey.

Only 5 schools typed some of the completed interviews, none typing all of them; of these, only 3 typed *compilations* of either student and/or teacher interview responses. Four gave estimates of typing time: 1 hour, 1½ days, 4 days, and 1 week. Only 2 schools, FS3 and IS5, enlisted a helper not on the Committee for typing and compiling. At the 3 other schools with typed interviews or compilations, either the Steering Committee chairs or, in one case, the parent interviewer did them.

Revision to the *School Study* handbook. The use of written surveys as a substitute for verbal interviews of teachers was intended to be a last resort option only. Yet it seems that interviewers frequently relied on teacher surveys and, erroneously though less often; student surveys. Therefore, the language that presents the teacher survey as an option will be removed from the final version of the *School Study* handbook. Although verbal interviews may not permit interviewees to deliberate over their responses as thoroughly, they save time and add an important interactive element to the study process. Also, verbal interviews produce briefer responses, making it easier for the Steering Committee to write the report. This change to the handbook is reflected in Table 13 at the end of the Results.

The Report (Step 2)

Schools adopted various forums for writing the school report (see Table 4). Four Steering Committees divided the report among themselves and completed their assigned sections individually. None reported working in pairs. Four Steering Committees worked together in a group meeting or series of meetings, an interesting variation because it was not presented in the handbook as a possibility. Finally, at 2 schools, FS3 and IS5, 1 or 2 Steering Committee members took responsibility for writing the entire report themselves; this was not recommended, although at IS5, the chairperson had no choice because others did not show up at what was supposed to have been a group undertaking.

Table 4: Selected Aspects of Report Writing (Step 2) by Field-Test School

	FS1	FS2	FS3	FS4	FS5	IS1	IS2	IS4	IS5	IS6
1. Format for report writing [mtg=meeting(s); indiv=individually; pers=person(s)]	mtg	mtg	indiv (1 pers)	mtg	3 mtg	indiv	indiv	indiv	indiv (1-2 pers)	indiv
2. Range of individuals' time spent on report writing (in hours, ex. wk=week)	3-8	3-25	3-10	2-4	12	2	2-5	2-4	2-10	1 wk

Report writing was most frequently identified by Steering Committee members as the most time-consuming task of the school study process. Time estimates for report writing came from two sources—Steering Committee chairs in phone interviews and/or individual Steering Committee members in feedback forms. Estimates were provided either as individual hours spent per Steering Committee member; as hours spent by the collective Steering Committee in a group meeting or series of meetings, which would apply equally to each participating member; or as a time period (1 school, IS6, said 1 week). Respondents from nine schools provided estimates in hours, giving a total of 24 estimates (see Table 4).[10]

Of the 24 time estimates, the range was 1.5 - 22.5 hours per person; the most frequent response was 3 hours; and the average was 5 hours. If the highest estimate were discarded (22½ hours), the range would be 1.5 -12 hours and the average would be 4.1 hours. Thus, the average time spent per individual to contribute to the report may be placed somewhere between 4 and 5 hours. A few of these estimates include contemporaneous typing time, but most do not.

All schools typed their report. Time estimates given for typing only, done separately from report writing, ranged from 1-10 hours per individual. Only 5 schools enlisted a helper for the typing task; except for possibly FS4, which may have requested a parent's volunteer assistance for typing, these schools asked paid staff such as an administrative or instructional assistant to type the report. At the other 5 schools, either the Steering Committee chair typed the entire report or individual Steering Committee members typed their own sections.

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[10] However, these should not be considered estimates from 24 separate individuals, since a Steering Committee chair may have provided an estimate to apply to all Steering Committee members, and some of those same members may have given their own personal estimate in a feedback form; thus there are two estimates for some individuals. Yet they are all counted in this examination to provide as representative an estimate as possible.

The Rating Meeting (Step 3)

Almost all field-test schools structured the rating meeting the same (see Table 5). Eight schools divided faculty among small groups as prescribed in the handbook. However, 2 schools adopted a different structure for their meeting: FS5 completed its ratings as a whole faculty group and IS5 targeted only the specific teachers who taught the grade levels under scrutiny in IS5's study. Of the 10 schools, 3 schools—IS4, IS5, and IS6—invited faculty on a voluntary basis and consequently reported low turnouts (approximately 33-50%), even though IS6 offered stipends and credit toward professional development requirements. The main detractor from attendance at IS5 was that the rating meeting was held after school had closed for the year (in addition to having invited only a select group of teachers). Of the other 7 schools, 5 reported attendance at 70-100% and 2 did not report a figure.

Table 5: Selected Aspects of Rating (Step 3) by Field-Test School

	FS1	FS2	FS3	FS4	FS5	IS1	IS2	IS4	IS5	IS6
1. Faculty in small groups format for rating meeting	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓
2. Rating meeting attendance satisfactory	yes	?	yes	?	yes	yes	yes	no	no	no

The time span for schools' rating meeting ranged from 1-3 hours (except for IS5's rating meeting, which was an intensive 6-hour session among 3 people that incorporated a substantial amount of planning). Five schools estimated approximately 2 hours, and the average for all schools except IS5 was 2 hours. In phone interviews or other means of feedback, most Steering Committee chairs commented that the rating meeting was expeditious, concluding much earlier than expected. According to the chairperson, even the 3 individuals at IS5 whose meeting was quite long (6 hours) felt that it was a wonderful experience.

The length of each school's meeting varied somewhat depending on whether the faculty progressed to preliminary work on step 4 by discussing priorities after completing the rating activity. For instance, IS2's meeting, which lasted only 1 hour, adjourned immediately after rating with no follow-up discussion. Yet 9 of the 10 schools progressed to discussion afterwards, which led to preliminary priority work in 8 schools.

Facilitators and Steering Committee chairs of some schools reported initial impediments to discussion such as disinterest, inflated perception of the writing program's current effectiveness, or reluctance to voice controversial viewpoints; yet all those who reported these hindrances added that useful discussion evolved nevertheless. On the other hand, a principal and Steering Committee chair at two schools, FS1 and FS3, viewed their discussions as tedious or indicative of a problem in their study process (rather than a means of furthering understanding) because the faculty had difficulty reaching consensus.

A few schools shared a unique aspect about their rating meeting. FS1 asked rating meeting participants to reflect on what they had learned on a 2-item questionnaire at the meeting's conclusion. At IS1, one Steering Committee member criticized that the rating meeting was not extensive enough for motivating teachers; this individual proposed a different orientation for the rating meeting that would more effectively stimulate teachers' planning and responsibility for improvement.

Priorities and Planning (Step 4)

Steering Committees of the 10 schools orchestrated step 4 in a variety of ways (see Table 6). Seven schools assigned responsibility for priorities and planning to a committee: the Consolidated Planning Committee, the Writing Committee (either a separate entity or part of the former), the SBDM Council, a committee to be newly formed for the purpose, or the original school study Steering Committee. Of these 7 schools, 3 divided the step 4 activities between two of these committees or between the entire faculty and one committee. Two schools—FS5 and IS1—assigned responsibility for step 4 to the entire faculty, rather than to a committee or some combination of such. One school did not report its structure for step 4 because it had not planned it yet.

Table 6: Selected Aspects of Priority-Setting and Planning (Step 4) by Field-Test School

	FS1	**FS2**	**FS3**	**FS4**	**FS5**	**IS1**	**IS2**	**IS4**	**IS5**	**IS6**
1. Format for priority-setting and planning (com= committee(s); fac=faculty)	com	com	com	2 com	fac	fac	fac & com	none yet	com	2 com
2. Progression to priority-setting (or preliminary discussion)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	
3. Progression to planning				✓		✓	✓		✓	
4. Progression to actions							✓		✓	

In review, it seems that some schools assigned step 4 responsibilities so as to preserve the integrity of progress already made in their school study. That is, they would assign at least part of step 4 to a decision-making body that was already somewhat involved with the study—such as the Steering Committee, Writing Committee, or whole faculty. Whereas if they gave the entire task to a group unfamiliar with what was already learned, the new group might regress to needs assessment, essentially redoing what had already been accomplished.

Eight schools engaged in setting priorities, the first phase of step 4, to some extent (see Table 6). All 10 schools either reported the intention to finish step 4 activities in the 1999-2000 school year or gave no indication that they had completed them by the close of the 1998-1999 year. Although they did not report having finished, 4 schools did begin planning actions, the second phase of step 4, by the close of the year—FS4, IS1, IS2, IS5—a few already incorporating new actions into their Consolidated Plan. Of these 4 schools, 2 progressed to acting on one of their plans—IS2 hired a writing specialist and IS5 involved its students in a promotional project for Habitat for Humanity over the summer.

Revision to the *School Study* handbook. An assessment of how field-test schools commenced and proceeded with step 4 activities will has caused a revision in the *School Study* handbook. The rating meeting (step 3) proved to be a good forum for moving to step 4 in that most schools began priorities work during the course of the meeting. Thus it was decided that the first part of step 4, setting priorities, would be added to step 3 in the final version of the handbook. This modification possesses the benefit of preventing schools from losing momentum by pausing too long before completing priorities and planning, as some field-test schools did. The second part of step 4, planning actions, instead of remaining as step 4, will be recast as a supplemental section in the handbook, thereby providing the indication that planning should follow but making the study process smaller by not presenting planning as an entirely new step. These changes in design should make the *School Study* process less formidable overall. They are listed in Table 13 at the end of the Results.

Assessment of the Steps and Products of the *School Study*

Comparative time requirement per step of the *School Study*. Best estimates for each of the study's steps are provided in Table 7 for a convenient review and comparison.

Table 7: Time Estimates per Step of the *School Study of Writing Instruction*

Orchestration & clerical tasks:	Steering Committee planning meetings and preparations Compiling/typing interviews Typing the report Various copying	4-7 hours per Committee member 14-21 hours (over 3 ½ days) 3-10 hours no estimate provided by the data
Step 1:	Interviewing	14 hours (over 2-3 days)
Step 2:	Writing the report	3-5 hours per Committee member
Step 3:	Rating (+ some prioritizing)	2 hours per faculty participant
Step 4:	Setting priorities Planning actions	1 hour per participant no estimate

Of the 43 Steering Committee members who completed a feedback form, all replied to question 2, ***which tasks in the School Study required the most time***, with a total of 66 responses. Compiling the report was the most frequent answer, meriting 28 responses. Several of these respondents also said that, in addition to the actual writing, reading through interview responses prior to writing was time-consuming. Next were tasks associated with Steering Committee planning and preparation, such as attending planning meetings, reading the handbook, scheduling interviews, copying interview forms, and typing compilations of teacher and student interviews (18 responses). The third most frequent response was interviewing (13 responses); all of these responses came from the 5 schools at which Steering Committee faculty or other faculty members conducted some or all of the interviews themselves. The fourth response was the rating meeting (5 responses). The last 2 responses were "other" and one that was incomprehensible. For a comparison of responses by school, see Table 8.

Table 8: Time Requirement and Helpfulness of *School Study* Steps by Field-Test School

	FS1	FS2	FS3	FS4	FS5	IS1	IS2	IS4	IS5	IS6
1. Step(s) that required the most time (report=report writing; intvw=interviewing)	report	intvw; report	intvw	report	intvw; report	report	report	report	rating	intvw
2. Most helpful parts/steps (intvw=interviews)	intvw	none	intvw	intvw; report	intvw	intvw	intvw	intvw	intvw	intvw

Most helpful parts of the study. Question 8 on the Steering Committee feedback form asked *which parts of the study process were most helpful.* Forty of the 43 Steering Committee participants who completed a feedback form responded to this question; 3 did not because their form was missing the question. The 40 respondents gave a total of 50 answers. By an overwhelming margin, the most frequent response was the interviews (26 responses). Several respondents specified either the student or teacher interviews or both, either because they judged them to be honest or judged them to be inaccurate. Several referred to the comparison of discrepant viewpoints among role groups. The second most frequent response was the rating meeting discussion or the school profile generated in the rating meeting (9 responses). The third highest response was the report (5 responses). The remaining 10 responses included the Steering Committee's collaborative work, the rating guide, heightened understanding or awareness of needs, everything, and nothing; the 4 responses of "nothing" all came from respondents at FS2. For a comparison of responses by school, see Table 8.

Least helpful parts of the study. Question 9 on the Steering Committee feedback form asked *which parts of the study process were least helpful.* Thirty-two of the possible 43 respondents answered this question; 8 did not answer; and 3 did not answer because their form was missing the question. The 32 respondents gave a total of 35 answers. Seventeen responded that no parts of the study were least helpful.[11] From the remaining 15 respondents who specified an aspect(s) of the study, 6 responses referred to errors in the *School Study* instrument; 5 responses referred to either teacher or student interviews; 5 referred to one of the following aspects—the time frame, the tedium of the rating meeting, the lack of parent and community involvement, or the fact that it was a review of what was already known; and finally, 2 responses were that all parts were least helpful, both of these responses coming from individuals at FS2.

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[11] If the 8 nonresponses are interpreted as indications that these 8 nonrespondents likewise felt that no parts of the study were least helpful, and are added to the 17 who responded as such, the modified number of those who felt that no parts were least helpful would be 25.

Assessment of the representativeness of the school report. The report produced from step 2 of the study process was examined for reliability for 7 of the 10 field-test schools that completed the self-study. For 3 of the schools, an authentic examination could not be performed. The report was chosen as the document for the external review (as opposed to the rating form or school profile) because it serves as the synthesis of the raw interview data and then the source document for rating the writing program, making it the key information valve in the study process.

In terms of accuracy and breadth of data points considered, 4 of the 7 schools' reports were *entirely or approximately equivalent* to the reviewer's version in most of their responses.[12] Two schools' reports were at least *partially equivalent* in most of their responses. One school's report was *barely or not at all equivalent* in most of its responses. Although these results are favorable overall, most reports were not comprehensive but brief with a lack of detail: only 2 incorporated substantial and strategic detail, another 2 did so partially, and 3 did not at all. Additionally, the "Other" space was used in very few reports for recording additional information not gleaned from the interviews; however, sometimes this was due to writers including such commentary in the designated role group spaces along with the other data.

Also, schools' reports sometimes contained misrepresentations; usually only one such error was noted per school. The reviewer noticed that a misrepresentation often occurred in the same report topic (*9C–student opportunity to compare writing between school years*, which is essentially a question about the number of grade levels at which portfolios are required of students). Report writers would say that portfolios are required by teachers of all grades, when actually, the interview data did not show that to be the case.

Assessment of the representativeness of the school profile. Participants were asked to assess the value of another product of their school study—the school profile produced in step 3 of the study process (the rating meeting). Both principals and Steering Committee members were asked *whether the school profile was an accurate picture of their writing program's strengths and weaknesses* (question 1 on the principal form and question 5 on the Steering Committee form). In a second part to the question, they were asked what about the study process may have caused inaccuracies, if any.

Out of a total of 51 principals and Steering Committee members who completed a feedback form,[13] 45 answered the question and 6 did not (3 because the question was missing from their form). Of the 45 respondents, 28 said yes (the profile was accurate), 7 said mostly or somewhat, and 10 said no (5 being from 1 school—FS2). In 8 of the 10 schools, the majority of respondents felt that the profile was somewhat to totally accurate.

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[12] Incidentally, school faculties were more stringent in their impression of their school's report than the external reviewer. Although the reviewer gave relatively high reliability assessments to the reports of these 4 schools, faculties at 3 of them stated at the rating meetings that the report was unrepresentative of their program.

[13] The principal of FS4 filled out both a principal and Steering Committee form, so there were actually 52 forms total; however, his answers are counted only once.

Faculty members who were not on the Steering Committee were not asked to complete a feedback form. However, their overall impressions of the school study were conveyed by facilitators/contacts and Steering Committee chairs: according to these sources, faculties at 3 schools expressed dissension with some of the ratings shown on the school profile. (Some dissension was expected as a part of the process of discussion and agreeing on ratings.)

In phone interviews and responses to various questions on the feedback forms (not just to question 5), study participants identified several aspects of the study that they thought were sources of inaccuracies to the report, ratings, or school profile:

- Several participants from 7 schools felt that the teacher and/or student interviewee samples were not large enough (of the 7 schools that made this observation, 3 did interview more teachers than called for and 2 interviewed more students).

- Two individuals named the *randomness* of the teacher or student interviewee samples as a detraction from the accuracy of study findings, one suggesting that teachers be allowed to choose the student interviewees.

- Several individuals from 6 schools evaluated the honesty of teacher and/or student interview responses, or expressed an a priori concern about candidness that caused them to orchestrate interviews in certain ways. Individuals at 4 of these schools identified less than candid responses in either the teacher or student set of interviews, whereas others simply identified inaccuracies without a qualitative judgement that they were intentional. In the same vein, 4 school faculties were skeptical or cynical about the validity of district administrator interviewee responses regarding district support of the writing program.

- Repeated references were made to a concern that particular role groups did not understand interview questions or the true meaning of writing well enough to ask or respond correctly. These role groups were identified as elementary and middle grades students (mentioned by participants at 5 schools); certain interviewers, such as parents or others unfamiliar with writing program jargon (mentioned by 3 schools); and teachers (2 schools).

- Many individuals at 8 schools complained that (a) interview questions were not linked clearly to report topics, and/or (b) indicators were not aligned correctly between the report and the various rating tools (i.e., rating guide, rating form, school profile), causing them to record data or rate indicators insufficiently.

Suggestions for improvements to the study. Both principals and Steering Committee members were asked for suggestions to improve the *School Study of Writing Instruction* (question 4 on the principal form and question 10 on the Steering Committee form). Forty-three of a possible 51 respondents gave 55 responses and 8 did not respond, 6 because their form was missing the question due to a copying error.

Of the 55 suggestions, 26 were recommendations involving *changes to the School Study handbook*. Twenty of these 26 dealt with an aspect of the interviews, such as aligning interview questions to the report, condensing the number of questions, or changing the guidelines for selecting the interviewee samples. Two were suggestions to correct the misalignment of indicators on the rating form. Three were recommended modifications to the basic design of the study process—incorporate annual reviews and restructure the rating meeting. Finally, 1 proposed simplifying handbook guidelines in general.

Fourteen of the 55 responses were *recommendations related to the logistics of conducting the study*. Five were suggestions to lengthen the time frame. Five related to the study's timing in the school year. Three concerned the need for more financial resources (all from FS2). Finally, 1 was a suggestion that the facilitator more fully explain the purpose and benefits of the study to the Steering Committee.

Of the remaining 15 responses, 10 were statements that no improvements were needed, 2 were recommendations to discontinue the *School Study* altogether (both from FS2), and 3 were incomprehensible.

Section summary. The interviews step was the most frequent response to the four questions on the feedback form(s) that asked respondents to reflect on specific aspects of the study process. By a large margin, respondents found the interviews to be the most helpful aspect of the process. At the same time, they most frequently pinpointed the interviews as the source of inaccuracies in the final ratings; thus, most suggestions for improvement related to the interviewing step. Despite these perceived inaccuracies, most Steering Committee participants felt that the school profile accurately reflected their school's writing program.

Revisions to the *School Study* handbook. Many participants (a) reported having difficulty correlating interview questions to the report topics for writing and (b) identified misalignment between indicators on the report form and indicators on the rating tools (i.e., rating form and school profile).

Regarding concern (a), the research team decided that the "Table of report sections and data," which had been used in the pilot test but substantially altered for the field test, would be revised and reinserted in the final version handbook to serve as a data-linking guide (see Appendix J). The team also decided to remove the two sample reports, one that was very brief and one that was comprehensive, and replace them with a new medium-depth one.

Regarding concern (b), the research team reviewed the handbook and confirmed that some indicators were misaligned among the various forms. Some later identified indicators, as well as revisions to existing indicators, had been added to some forms but inadvertently omitted from others. As a result, not only were some indicators missing, but in a few instances the same indicators were numbered and phrased differently among the forms. In sum, in the process of correcting these errors, the research team discovered that there were 36 indicators of successful writing programs, not 34 (see Appendix K). All forms were corrected for the final version of the *School Study* handbook. The changes discussed here are reflected in Table 13 at the end of the Results section of this report.

Time Span and Time Investment

Time span. Once schools undertook the *School Study*, they completed it within a span of 5-9 weeks, the average completion period being 6.5 weeks (*SD* 1.4) (see Table 9). These figures represent total time spent, but not necessarily a continuous period of time, since some schools suspended their study for spring break and/or a state-testing period. There was not a notable difference between facilitated schools' and independent schools' average completion times. Several independent schools were able to complete the study in 6 weeks. The only 2 schools that completed the study in as few as 5 weeks were facilitated schools; however, participants at 1 of these schools, FS2, reported feeling rushed.

Table 9: Time Span of Field-Test Schools to Complete the *School Study of Writing Instruction*

	Facilitated schools (FSs)					**Independent schools (ISs)**					
	FS1	FS2	FS3	FS4	FS5	IS1	IS2	IS3	IS4	IS5	IS6
Time span in weeks	9	5	6	5	7	6	6	—	6	6	9
Average for FSs & ISs	6.4 weeks					6.6 weeks					
Average all schools	6.5 weeks										

Time investment. Forty-three Steering Committee members completed a feedback form, and all responded to question 1, *what was one's personal time spent to conduct the School Study.* Of the 43 respondents, the range of hours spent per individual was 2-50 hours; the average per individual was 13.5 hours (*SD* 9.1) (see Table 10). For FSs only, the range was 2-40 hours and the average was 13.8 hours (*SD* 7.4). For ISs only, the range was 3.5-50 hours and the average was 12.9 hours (*SD* 11.6).

Table 10: Reported Individual Time Spent to Conduct the *School Study of Writing Instruction*

Hours spent	**# Steering Committee respondents**	**Range**	**Mean**	***SD***
1-10	20	2-50 hours	13.5 hours	9.1 hours
10+ - 20	13			
20+ - 30	7			
30+	3			
N = 43 respondents				

Several individuals at both facilitated and independent schools spent a substantial number of hours to conduct the study (see Table 11). More than 20 hours was arbitrarily chosen to define *a substantial number of hours.* At facilitated schools, 7 of 27 respondents from 3 schools reported spending more than 20 hours. At independent schools, 3 of 16 respondents from 2 schools reported spending more than 20 hours. Also, based on other data, a Steering Committee chair from 1 additional IS is believed to have spent this much time but not reported it. In sum, approximately 10 or 11 individuals from either 5 or 6 schools (both FSs and ISs), representing about ¼ of Steering Committee respondents, worked a substantial number of hours. Moreover, at all schools except one, *only 1 or 2* Steering Committee members did so compared to their Committee co-members (whereas at FS2, *several* individuals on the Committee spent substantial hours). Of these 6 schools, 3 were ISs and 3 were FSs.

Table 11: Individuals Investing Substantial Hours in the *School Study* by Field-Test School

	FS1	FS2	FS3	FS4	FS5	IS1	IS2	IS4	IS5	IS6
# Steering Committee members who invested >20 hours		4	1		2		?		1	2

Comparison of Facilitator/Contact Person Assistance between Facilitated and Independent Schools

Services provided and not provided. The various services that facilitators and/or contact persons provided are listed in Table 12. As intended, facilitated schools and independent schools received different levels of services to conduct the *School Study of Writing Instruction*.

Table 12: Comparison of Facilitator/Contact Person Services
Used by Facilitated Schools (FSs) and Independent Schools (ISs)

	# FSs that Received Service	# ISs that Received Service
1. Prompting initiation of a school's study	3	0[a]
2. Preparing for Steering Committee meetings	5	1
3. Leading the first meeting and/or introducing the *School Study* handbook	5	1
4. Facilitating or attending subsequent planning meetings	5	0
5. Selecting interviewers and interviewees	4	0
6. Training interviewers	3	0
7. Serving as an interviewer	2	1
8. Facilitating report writing	4	0
9. Facilitating the faculty rating meeting	3	0
10. Facilitating priority-setting and planning	0	0

[a] This figure includes only those ISs that completed the study. IS3 did require prompting, however, did not complete the study.

Three FSs required prompting to commence their school study, although 1 of these schools, FS4, was clearly motivated to do the study and only needed to be reminded. One independent school, IS3, needed considerable prodding yet did not finish the study despite repeated encouragement and offers of assistance; none of the 5 ISs that finished the study required prompting that was apparent or reported.

All 5 FSs, plus IS5, received facilitator/contact assistance to prepare for Steering Committee and faculty meetings. The facilitator at FS3 also helped the Steering Committee with copying prior to some meetings.

Again, at all 5 FSs plus IS5, the facilitator/contact was present at the first Steering Committee meeting. At FS5 and IS5, which had the same facilitator/contact, the facilitator/contact attended a pre-meeting with the Steering Committee chair as well as the initial Steering Committee meeting. At 3 of the 5 FSs, the facilitator introduced the *School Study* process and handbook. At FS1, the Steering Committee chair and the facilitator jointly reviewed the process for the rest of the Committee. At only 1 facilitated school, FS5, did the chair present the *School Study* herself. At all 5 ISs that completed the study, the Steering Committee chair presented the *School Study*.

At all facilitated schools, the facilitator attended subsequent planning meetings and/or work meetings (for report writing and rating) of the Steering Committee. Contact persons did not attend subsequent meetings of the Steering Committee at any of the independent schools.

Facilitators/contact persons provided several types of aid related to the interviewing step of the study. Again, and as expected, facilitated schools generally received more assistance than independent schools. At 4 FSs, the facilitator participated in or guided the selection of interviewees. At 3 FSs, the facilitator trained either the Steering Committee or interviewers in interviewing techniques. At 2 FSs, plus IS5, the facilitator acted as an interviewer. (It was supposed that facilitated schools might be more inclined than independent schools to request interviewing services from their facilitator/contact because they had more involvement with them. Yet the 2 FSs requested only minimal facilitator help with interviews, while IS5 requested a substantial amount of time from its contact person for all interviews.)

Concerning report writing, the facilitators gave guidance at 4 FSs. At 3 of these schools, the facilitator attended a group meeting convened for the purpose of starting or completing the report. At FS3, the facilitator gave direction for expanding the report after it had been written. No ISs received facilitation for the report-writing step.

Two aspects of writing the report, type of forum and time spent, were examined in relationship to the school's status as a facilitated school or independent school. Regarding the first variable, a Steering Committee's forum for writing the report, there was a noticeable difference. All facilitated schools except FS3 worked in a group setting while all ISs worked individually on their report sections.[14] (Two of the 4 FSs that worked as a group chose to do so of their own accord, while 2 did so at the suggestion of the facilitator.) Regarding the second variable, time spent to complete the report, there was no perceptible difference between facilitated and independent schools.

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[14] IS5 had planned to work in a group meeting, but participants did not show up; thus the chair wrote most of the report herself.

Concerning the faculty rating meeting, the facilitator led the meeting at the Steering Committees' request at 3 FSs. One additional FS originally intended to have the facilitator present, but did not call her after the original date for the meeting was changed. As expected, no rating meetings at ISs were attended by contact persons.

Concerning setting priorities and planning actions, neither facilitators nor contact persons aided FSs or ISs, respectively. (However, some facilitators were present at the rating meeting when preliminary priority-setting took place.)

There were a number of other tasks, related to various steps of the study process, for which facilitators did not provide assistance. These were substantial copying jobs (of handbooks, forms, and completed documents), compiling interviews, writing and distributing the report, and typing.

Perceived need for assistance. On the whole, field-test schools (both facilitated and independent schools) rarely contacted their facilitator or contact person for assistance. Usually, the facilitator or contact person initiated phone and e-mail contacts. When schools (principals or chairs) did initiate contacts, they did so only once or twice and had only one or two questions; furthermore, they were as likely to call someone at one of the sponsoring agencies of the research team as they were to call the facilitator/contact. Only 2 schools—FS5 and IS5—contacted their facilitator/contact person fairly often.

Question 4 on the Steering Committee feedback form inquired about respondents' perceptions of their ability to have conducted the *School Study* without assistance and for what tasks in the study they might or did require help. The question was worded differently between the feedback forms given to facilitated schools and independent schools. For FSs, the question was (a) *whether they could have carried out the study without outside help* and (b) *what tasks would have been difficult without outside help.* For ISs, the question was (a) *at what points in the study did they need to contact someone with questions* and (b) *for which tasks did they need more assistance than was available.*

Twenty-seven Steering Committee feedback forms were received from facilitated schools. In response to the first part of question 4, 15 said yes (they could have carried out the study without outside help), 7 said no, 1 said possibly, 3 were unclear, and 1 did not respond. Fourteen of the 27, including those who had answered yes and those no, responded to the second part of the question (what tasks would have been difficult . . .) with a total of 21 responses. Of the 21 responses, 10 concerned the initial overview and setup of the study, 6 related to interviewing, 4 related to the report, and 1 to leading meetings. What is noteworthy about almost all of the 21 responses is that they were the specific activities for which each school had actually received assistance from the facilitator. Virtually none related to activities for which respondents had not received help; only 1 school, FS5, listed a task with which it was unaided but would have appreciated outside help (interviewing). Thus, almost none claimed needing more assistance than that already supplied to them.

Sixteen Steering Committee feedback forms were received from independent schools. In response to the first part of question four, 8 of the 16 respondents reported contacting someone with questions during the study, at least 3 of whom consulted another individual in the school rather than the contact person. Five of the 16 respondents reported having no need to contact someone with questions, 3 adding that their questions were answered amply by their Steering Committee chair. Three of the 16 did not respond. In response to the second part of question 4 (for which tasks did they feel the need for more assistance than was available), all 16 said none or gave no response, 2 adding that the assistance received in response to their questions was adequate.

In summary, most participants from facilitated schools perceived that they were capable of conducting the study independently, and participants from independent schools had few questions while they were conducting the study independently. For what tasks did they feel that facilitator assistance was needed, respondents from facilitated schools identified only those tasks for which they had received help. Respondents from independent schools did not name any tasks for which they would have appreciated assistance. Thus, those participants who received less assistance were less likely to name tasks for which they thought assistance was required.

Actual need for assistance. In addition to reviewing the extent to which schools perceived that they needed assistance, it is useful to examine other results for more precisely determining their needs in completing the *School Study*. Four variables were taken into consideration for assessing schools' actual need for facilitation: (1) errors or counterintended approaches to carrying out some of the tasks in the study, (2) the extent to which Steering Committee chairs at ISs served in a quasi-facilitator capacity, (3) the number of schools that switched to facilitated or independent status from their original designated status by virtue of the amount of help they required, and (4) the difference in how far FSs and ISs progressed in the study.

(1) While the general perception of both facilitated and independent schools that they could have accomplished the study without much assistance may be largely accurate, examination revealed some errors in how they approached certain tasks—for these, they would have benefited from additional guidance. These errors included

- not communicating the study's purpose and inviting buy-in at the outset
- including too many people on the Steering Committee
- being unprepared for meetings
- choosing primary interviewers from among school faculty and staff (on or off the Steering Committee)
- interviewing teachers in pairs
- too readily interviewing teachers via written survey
- interviewing students individually
- not probing for fuller responses from student interviewees
- interviewing students via written survey
- not identifying an appropriate district administrator interviewee
- not sharing Steering Committee duties, i.e., report writing, evenly among members
- not enlisting helpers from outside the Committee to type interviews and the report
- not requiring that the entire faculty attend the rating meeting
- forgetting a step in the study, e.g., the rating meeting

Most of these counterintended practices deal with the interviewing step. For the most part, the errors mentioned here may be attributed to both facilitated schools and independent schools. Two errant practices more apparent in FSs were failing to communicate the study's purpose at the outset and choosing primary interviewers from among school faculty and staff. Three that appear to be problems more associated with ISs were not sharing responsibilities evenly among Steering Committee participants, not interviewing students in groups, and not requiring the whole faculty to be at the rating meeting.

(2) It has already been noted that at possibly 5 schools,[15] 1 or 2 Steering Committee members performed a substantial portion of the work required to complete the study. Of these 5 schools, 3 were ISs. This circumstance generated the question of whether the overcommitment of these particular individuals was partially due to their lack of external facilitator assistance. A comparison of the tasks they performed to those performed by their overcommitted counterparts at the 2 FSs showed that, in both situations, these individuals did several similar tasks not in the domain of facilitators, such as copying, report writing, typing, and substantial interviewing. This finding would seem to indicate that their substantial investment of energy was more a function of how they delegated Committee work than whether they had a facilitator or not.

However, the chairs at these 3 ISs *also* did a number of tasks that their counterparts at FSs had not done, because they did not have a facilitator's services as their FS counterparts did. These included setting up and leading Steering Committee meetings, introducing the *School Study* process, assuring the logical scheduling of tasks, and facilitating the rating meeting. Thus, the large investment of work by chairs at ISs was to some extent due to having to act in a quasi-facilitator capacity. In addition, it merits mention here that the Steering Committee chair at 2 of these ISs had either little or no contact with their designated contact person, reinforcing their lone leadership role in carrying out the study.

(3) Based on reports from Steering Committee chairs and facilitators/contacts and on overall assessments of schools' efficacy, it may be concluded that 1 facilitated school (FS1) could have completed the school study as an independent school and that 1 independent school (IS5) evolved into a facilitated school. The assistant principal of FS1 led the Steering Committee in such a way that members were always prepared and required perhaps no intervention; he remarked that the handbook was easy to follow and straightforward enough that he would feel comfortable leading other schools through the process. The Steering Committee chair at IS5 had many initial set-up questions and requested their contact person to take the lead in all interviewing. One other IS (IS2) may or may not be likened to a facilitated school because the chair—who did a substantial amount of work, including all interviewing—was a writing cluster leader from the district office. So in a sense, she acted as an external facilitator. Overall, there was not a noticeable switch of all ISs to FS status, or vice versa.

(4) Finally, the degree of progress achieved in the study by both facilitated schools and independent schools was evaluated as a measure of their need for facilitator assistance. At the rating meeting, all 5 FSs and only 3 ISs engaged in extended discussion about priorities. Yet paradoxically, while 3 ISs progressed

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[15] This number excludes FS2, at which *several* Steering Committee participants worked a substantial number of hours. This analysis is intended to highlight those schools in which a minority of Steering Committee members invested substantially more time and work than their co-members.

to the second part of step 4, planning actions, only 1 FS did so. And further, the only 2 schools that took action based on their plans before the opening of the next school year were ISs.

Revision to the *School Study* handbook. A change will be made to the handbook to help future facilitators address potential problem areas and avert schools from the use of errant practices in the study process. Some of the final version handbooks will contain a preface of facilitator guidance notes, these to be distributed only to facilitators. This change is reflected in Table 13 at the end of the Results.

Assessment of the Worth and Outcomes of the *School Study*

Worth the effort. Both principals and Steering Committee members were asked *whether the study's outcome was worth the effort* (question 2 on the principal form and question 6 on the Steering Committee form). Of a possible 51 respondents, 48 answered and 3 did not because their forms were missing the question. Of the 48 respondents, 34 said yes and 6 were unsure pending future outcomes. Seven said no and 1 was ambiguous (5 of the 7 who said no came from FS2). Those who thought that the study was worth the effort represented a majority at 9 of the 10 schools (all schools but FS2).

Outcomes produced or anticipated. Principals and Steering Committee members were asked either *how the study had benefited/would benefit or had affected/would affect the school* (question 3 on the principal form and question 7 on the Steering Committee form, respectively). Of a possible 51 respondents,[16] 48 responded and 3 did not because their forms were missing the question. The 48 respondents gave a total of 66 responses.

Nineteen of the 66 responses were written in *nonspecific* terms of raised awareness or expected changes to the writing program, i.e., "We have a better understanding of how [the various role groups] view our writing process," and ". . .it will allow us to strengthen our program."

Thirty-six responses (from 23 of the 48 respondents) were *specific* about how awareness was raised or particular changes that had occurred or were expected to occur. These responses were categorized as specific because they mentioned particular actions and/or the actors involved. Of these 36 responses, the most frequent response concerned the need for participation of nonaccountable teachers in writing instruction so that writing programs would become fully collaborative and, similarly, the need for professional development of all teachers to that end (20 responses). The remaining 16 responses that listed desired or expected specific outcomes generated by the study were dispersed among these categories: changes to the Consolidated Plan or SBDM Council policy (7 responses), changes in personnel (5 responses), administrative support and funding for changes (2 responses), and professional development (2 responses—that is, professional development not mentioned specifically in regards to collaboration as above).

Finally, of the remaining 11 of the 66 responses, 7 responses were that there would be no effects as a result of the school study (5 of which came from FS2), 3 responses were not sure or no effects yet, and 1 response was unclear.

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[16] There were actually 52 forms because the principal from FS4 submitted both a principal and Steering Committee form. His answers to the question are additive and not contradictory; therefore, they are all counted in this analysis.

Summary of the Results

Ideal practices and counterintended practices in conducting the *School Study* have been detailed throughout the previous discussion of field-test results. From these, best practices have been extrapolated and summarized in Table 13. The first section of the table lists guidelines that were already part of the handbook, but need to be reemphasized based on how important they proved to be or how weakly they were adhered to by field-test schools. The second section lists new and revised guidelines to be incorporated in the *School Study* handbook based on the field-test experience and, again, relative importance.

Table 13: Summary of Lessons Learned from the Field Test
of the *School Study of Writing Instruction*

Part I. Existing Guidelines to Reemphasize in the *School Study of Writing Instruction*
Setup
Emphasize the following recommendations: 1. Garner buy-in from faculty and inform Steering Committee members of the study's purpose prior to its commencement. 2. Ideally, the Steering Committee should include no more than 5 members.
Interviews (step 1)
Emphasize the following recommendations: 3. It is preferable to solicit a pair of interviewers rather than only one. 4. Interviewers should be parents or individuals not involved with regular operations of the school and relatively unknown to interviewees. Avoid committing faculty or other regular staff, whether on the Steering Committee or not, to this task. Higher grade level students from another school are an option, but not an ideal choice. 5. Interviewers, particularly those unfamiliar with the writing program, need to be trained. 6. You may interview more teachers and students than called for in the selection charts if you wish, but keep in mind that doing so will require you to spend more time assembling data into the report. 7. Identify an appropriate district administrator interviewee. Only if that person is adamantly opposed to being interviewed should you ask that person to complete the interview in writing. 8. Random selection of student interviewees is important and necessary. 9. Interviewing students in groups of 2-3 is much preferable to interviewing them individually. DO NOT interview students via written survey. 10. Probe student interviewees to elaborate on their answers. Rephrase questions if they do not understand what you are asking. 11. Compile teacher and student interviews.
Report (step 2)
Retain the following feature: 12. A comprehensive sample report (a new one)—but exclude the brief sample report.
Ancillary tasks
Emphasize the following recommendation: 13. Enlist clerical helpers for typing interview compilations and the report and for large copying jobs
(continued on the next page)

Table 13: Summary of Lessons Learned from the Field Test
of the *School Study of Writing Instruction (continued)*

Part II. Additional and Revised Guidelines to Include in the *School Study of Writing Instruction*

Setup

Include the following features:

1. A revised time estimate for completing the *School Study*, i.e., 5-8 weeks
2. A section of facilitator guidance notes, which would include tips on helping schools to handle such issues as faculty buy-in, diplomacy in report writing, and uncooperativeness of district administrators
3. A section of guidelines/agendas for 2-4 Steering Committee planning meetings

Include the following recommendations:

4. Begin by early February to avoid conflicts with events occurring in late spring.
5. Consider including the feeder school or next level school in your study.
6. Refrain from having one Steering Committee member do a substantially greater amount of work than the others. The chair may have to do a little more work than others but not major steps unaided.

Interviews (step 1)

Delete the following option and include a recommendation against it:

7. The option for teachers to complete the interview via written survey

Include the following feature:

8. Tips on gaining an interview with reluctant administrators

Report (step 2)

Include the following option and features:

9. The option to write the report in a group meeting of the Steering Committee
10. A "Table of report sections and data" that links interview questions to report topics for easier writing
11. A revised time estimate for report writing, i.e., 3-5 hours per contributor

Rating (step 3)

Include the following recommendations or options:

12. Invite faculty to the rating meeting on an expectant rather than a voluntary basis.
13. If you wish, provide an entire rating guide to each meeting participant.

Make the following revision:

14. Identify indicators missing from the rating tools and correct the numbering so that they are synchronous to the report.

Priorities and planning (step 4)

Redesign this step:

15. Combine the first part of step 4 into step 3, i.e., transform the faculty rating meeting into both a rating and setting priorities meeting, at which the school profile is used as a discussion piece. Make the second part of step 4, planning, a supplemental section in the handbook. Thus "step 4" will no longer exist.

Include the following recommendations:

16. Progress to planning and action in a timely fashion after the rating/priorities meeting.
17. If desired, repeat the study annually or as needed to measure writing program progress.

CONCLUSIONS

Overall, positive conclusions are drawn about the self-study process, mainly based on schools' extent of completion, respondents' estimation of its worth, and anticipated outcomes. Most schools completed the study to a satisfactory point and most Steering Committee participants believed that conducting the *School Study of Writing Instruction* (AEL & KDE, 1999) was worth the effort. The time commitment required to undertake the study remains an issue of concern. Facilitator assistance was found to be highly beneficial. The *School Study* instrument was shown to be generally valid and replicable, but may be improved with various adjustments.

Value

The results of the field test indicate that for most schools and individual participants, the *School Study of Writing Instruction* was a valuable and successful experience. Most schools completed the study to a satisfactory interim point or to its conclusion. Most progressed to productive faculty discussion and preliminary priority work at the rating meeting. Before the close of 1998-99, about half of the schools had already begun step 4, planning actions, and by the summer, 2 schools had acted on one of their new plans. Schools that had not begun planning had at least assigned the responsibility to a designated committee or the entire faculty for a later time. All schools expressed the intention to complete priority-setting and planning before or during the commencement of the 1999-2000 school year. It was promising that independent schools were able to conduct their study in about the same amount of time as facilitated schools. In sum, most schools demonstrated some degree of progress in decision making about enhancing their writing program, thus showing the *School Study's* capacity as a change agent.

Several concrete outcomes emanated from schools' self-studies. In response to a feedback form question about the effects and benefits of having conducted the *School Study*, only 7 of 48 principal and Steering Committee member respondents anticipated no effects or benefits (5 of these respondents being from 1 school, FS2). The 41 who responded otherwise listed many anticipated outcomes, some which were specific. The most frequently mentioned effects were (1) awareness of discontinuity in writing programs across grades and subject areas and, accordingly, (2) anticipated or already enacted measures to reverse that pattern. Other enacted or anticipated outcomes included revisions to school policies, changes in personnel, and new professional development.

Steering Committee participants demonstrated that they were cognizant of a key mechanism of the study—that of comparing interview responses among role groups—in that the great majority named the interviews as the most helpful part of the *School Study*. Their appreciation for the interviews was further demonstrated by the frequent practice of including more individuals than the suggested number in the interviewee samples. This was surprising because the inclusion of more interviews required more time to synthesize the data into the report, already the most time-consuming task of the study. In addition, some Steering Committee members found the rating meeting to be a valuable part of the study, demonstrating their appreciation for another key dynamic—that of all faculty sharing in writing program awareness.

In addition to the conclusion that the *School Study* is valuable for schools, based upon the evidence of productive outcomes as discussed above, it is also established that the *School Study* was *perceived* by Steering Committee participants to be valuable, based on their assessment of its worth relative to the effort it required. A sizable majority of principals and Steering Committee members said that the school study was worth the effort, representing a majority in 9 of the 10 schools. If Steering Committee members had not deemed the *School Study* to be worthwhile, its impact may have been mitigated during the planning step; however, since many participants valued it, it is possible that planned interventions may proceed to full implementation.

Despite these favorable results, it should be acknowledged that the study's value may be attenuated for some schools by the time required to conduct it. Steering Committee members invested a substantial amount of time and work over a period of several weeks, among competing commitments and sometimes without personal remuneration, to complete their school study. (Yet schools' delay in starting the study compounded the time pressures by forcing the study into an already busy period. Also, few schools effectively enlisted the aid of helpers for typing interviews and reports.) That Steering Committee members made these time sacrifices and still deemed the study to be worthwhile is a testament to the dedication of many teachers, administrators, and parents.

Another attenuating factor was the method of distributing the $1,500 stipend. The stipend was intended to be granted to schools after they had completed the school study and returned their feedback forms to the collaborative research team; however, most schools did not understand this and spent time securing it at the beginning of the study, a few because they needed it to pay for substitute teachers. The possibility of remuneration to future schools to aid them in implementing the study merits consideration.

FS2's singularity of having a negative experience may be attributed to a combination of several possible reasons, hypothesized as follows. First, FS2 seemed to lack the desire to conduct the study at the outset, perhaps partially due to deficits in leadership. The Steering Committee chair did not want the position, which was essentially forced on her. Also, the principal's support was not evident. Second, FS2 was 1 of 2 schools that conducted the school study in the shortest time frame (5 weeks) and the Steering Committee members reported that they felt rushed. Third, FS2 had more individuals who spent a substantial number of hours (>20 hours) than any of the other schools; 4 of the 11 individuals in the field test who spent this number of hours were from FS2. The chair was one of these individuals, investing 30-40 hours in time-intensive tasks such as interviewing, compiling interviews, and typing the report. Fourth, FS2's Steering Committee members were not compensated for their time because they used the stipend to pay for substitutes. It is difficult to ascertain whether this circumstance contributed to FS2's low evaluation of the *School Study,* because it is unknown how the majority of schools used their stipend in comparison (except that FS3 also used it to hire substitutes and IS5 divided it among Steering Committee members).

In summary, short-term benefits of the *School Study* have been established, while long-term effects have yet to be proven. A later phase in the Kentucky writing project is planned to assess changes in writing scores of schools that have undertaken the *School Study*. At the least, the research team believes that because the *School Study* is based on already existing criteria of the Kentucky writing program, it is an exemplary formative evaluation tool for schools. Even if they cannot demonstrate the degree of improvement in writing scores over the next few years that they desire, they will be better equipped to ascertain why not and knowledgeably direct improvement efforts. Moreover, they will be able to show that they have made attempts at meeting accountability standards and perhaps undergird requests for additional resources based on systematic data that establish genuine areas of need. Yearly reviews of a school's writing program, as suggested by a few principals in the field test, would further reinforce these benefits.

Facilitator Assistance

The field test demonstrated that facilitator assistance was advantageous for schools that received it. Independent schools conducted the *School Study* as efficaciously as facilitated schools in some respects and less so in other respects. The practices of both types of schools highlighted areas of need for facilitation in future schools.

Based on the consideration of several outcomes, the collaborative research team concluded that facilitator assistance was beneficial and preferable to no facilitator assistance:

- Steering Committees of FSs reported needing and appreciating the facilitator services that they received. The services that facilitators rendered alleviated Steering Committee chairs from duties associated with spearheading the school study, such as orchestrating and leading meetings and introducing the *School Study* process. The three services that they appreciated the most, in descending order, were leading the introductory meeting of the Steering Committee, assistance in interviewing, and assistance in report writing.

- Steering Committee members at some ISs did request facilitative services from their contact person. One independent school evolved into a facilitated school by virtue of the amount of assistance that it requested from its contact person.

- Some Steering Committee chairpersons at other ISs (who did not request facilitative-level services from their contact person) had to assume more responsibilities than their counterparts at facilitated schools presumably because they did not have the services of a facilitator. Although Steering Committee chairs at both FSs and ISs performed many of the same tasks, it was clear that chairs at ISs also had to perform tasks similar to those performed by the facilitators at FSs; with a facilitator, they most likely would have been relieved of these extra duties. Essentially, some Steering Committee chairs at ISs became quasi-facilitators.

- Also, both FSs and ISs engaged in some counterintended practices for which they could have benefited from further guidance, many related to the interviewing step. Three practices that were more evident in independent schools than in facilitated schools were (1) the failure to divide Steering Committee duties evenly among members, (2) the failure to involve the entire faculty in the rating meeting, and (3) the tendency to interview students individually. Yet FSs, despite facilitator assistance, experienced difficulties in implementing the *School Study* as well.

> These data, rather than mitigate the potential benefits of facilitator assistance, highlight areas where assistance can be improved. Facilitators can be trained to redirect some of the errant practices identified in the course of this field test.

In summary, facilitator assistance proved to be valuable in several ways and possesses the potential for being so in future schools that undertake the *School Study*.

Although facilitator assistance is deemed beneficial and desirable, it is true that schools perceived that they did not need considerable assistance. On the whole, both facilitated and independent schools initiated contacts with their facilitator or contact person minimally, and most did not request services beyond those already offered and provided to them. When asked about the amount of help required, FS respondents believed more than IS respondents that they needed facilitator assistance, but two thirds nevertheless maintained that they could have accomplished the study unaided. Surprisingly, independent schools respondents listed nothing when asked for which tasks they needed more assistance than was available. Participants from both types of schools demonstrated (or believed) that they were self-efficacious in conducting the *School Study* to the extent that they were compelled to be so. Still, the ability to be self-sufficient does not undermine the merits of facilitator assistance as established earlier; indeed, schools should be expected to be somewhat capable of performing a self-study, just as facilitators can be expected to enhance the process by which one is done.

A few paradoxes arose to the conclusion that facilitator assistance is preferable and advantageous. Two paradoxes were that independent schools were more likely to initiate their study without prompting and a few independent schools progressed further in the study steps than facilitated schools by actuating the planning phase. A plausible explanation for these effects is that ISs relied on their own motivation because they basically had no one else to rely on. Also, largely self-guided with mainly the handbook at their disposal, ISs had no impetus for pausing, thus some proceeded until all steps as outlined in the handbook were accomplished. Whereas in FSs, participants relied on the facilitator to prompt and direct them. The facilitator's presence through the rating meeting step may have fostered the implicit assumption that the rating meeting was a natural breakpoint or concluding activity, temporarily drawing attention away from succeeding steps. However, evidence of greater efficiency by some ISs to begin and conclude the study need not negate the several advantages of having a facilitator's aid at various junctures in the course of a school study.

Another paradox was that 1 FS completed the study with an unfavorable impression despite having a facilitator's assistance (and 1 IS did not complete the study despite the contact person's offers to help at a level akin to facilitator assistance). This result may reveal more about capacity and motivation of some schools than the usefulness of facilitation. It is conceivable, for instance, that some low-functioning schools, already beset with a host of problems that contribute to their low performance, would lack the prerequisite motivation to conduct a self-study, when perhaps they could benefit most from one. Therefore, such schools may need *intensive* facilitation—initial capacity-building work and strong advocacy of the study's benefits to raise faculty buy-in to an acceptable level—prior to launching the *School Study*. To these schools, the study would need to be presented well enough so that it is accepted at least as a necessity if not as a desirable. Then, the intensive facilitator might provide more than the usual amount of help for the time-intensive tasks of interviewing and report writing. Also, this type of facilitator could be instrumental in ensuring that the work is distributed advantageously among Steering Committee members as well as typists and interviewers not on the Committee. In a sense, intensive facilitation would be a way of infusing a school with temporary capacity so that the *School Study* could be a benefit rather than a burden.

Validity and Reliability

The reliability of schools' reports as judged from the examination was inconclusive—some reports were representative of interview data and some were not. Only 2 of the 7 reviewed would be considered model reports (and perhaps a third report as well, however a rigorous examination could not be performed on it). For the most part, reports were abbreviated and devoid of consistent discriminating detail.

The deficiency in detail may be attributed to several factors. (1) It seems that report writers sometimes considered only one interview data item for report topics as if there were a 1:1 relationship between them, while ignoring other relevant data items. Indeed, responses to report topics that required consideration of fewer data items were more likely to be consonant with the reviewer's responses, whereas responses to more abstract or comprehensive topics were less likely to be consonant. Other hypothesized and stated reasons for concise and undetailed reports include (2) limited time, (3) assumption of a certain level of prior knowledge by report readers (thereby obviating the writers from recording an undue amount of detail), (4) reluctance to write so pointedly that a particular person(s) or group is singled out for criticism (e.g., writers' unwillingness to state in report topic 9C that not all faculty required writing portfolios), and (5) reluctance to repeat data recorded earlier in the report.[17]

That brevity and generality seem to have been the prevailing mode for reports necessitates inquiry about the utility of the report, i.e., is it reasonable to expect schools to produce model reports, and, do the outcomes of a school study depend that much on the representativeness of the report? First, given such conditions as limited time, writers' reluctance to criticize others, and their assumption of readers' prior contextual knowledge of the school, it is probably unreasonable to expect future schools to write comprehensive reports. More realistically, report writing will continue to be regarded as one of several tasks to be accomplished as efficiently as possible to enable progress to next steps in the study. Second, if this shall be the case, whether brevity affects school study outcomes depends on other aspects of the study. The report is the springboard to rating and, ultimately, faculty discussion and outcomes. If abbreviated summary statements are adequate for stimulating productive discussion and outcomes, then brevity in the report should not be a major concern; some precision in data transposition may be responsibly sacrificed. Indeed, facilitators or Steering Committee chairs at most schools indicated that faculties arrived at meaningful discussion despite perceptions of an unrepresentative report (or interviews). Also, most Steering Committee members asserted that the resultant school profile was reflective of their writing program, and they anticipated productive changes to the program as a consequence.

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[17] The 5 report topics chosen for review occurred midway in the report. Reports from 2 schools showed evidence of a history effect, i.e., writers had included much more detail under report topics occurring earlier in the report than in related topics occurring later, perhaps to avoid unnecessarily repeating data.

On the other hand, a report without detail will deprive non-Steering Committee faculty of the essence of the interviews, the product that Steering Committee participants overwhelmingly identified as the most helpful aspect of the study—because they powerfully illustrated role groups' perceptions of the writing program. Hopefully, the reinsertion in the final handbook of a "Table of report sections and data" that links interview questions to report topics will encourage writers to be more precise about how they incorporate the interview data into their reports.

Validity and reliability should be entertained in the broader context of the *School Study of Writing Instruction* as an overall process, essentially a reconsideration of the study's value. The research team has posed two questions to that end. One, has the independent variable (the *School Study*) caused an effect on the dependent variable (the writing program)? Two, can other schools also conduct the *School Study of Writing Instruction* with a similar measure of success?

The team's response to the first question is that immediate effects have been observed—Steering Committees found the process to be informative and outcomes were implemented or anticipated. Yet it is too early to say what the ultimate effect will be. Year 5 of the Kentucky writing project will entail assessing the writing scores of schools that have completed the *School Study of Writing Instruction* and comparing them to scores from earlier years. The ultimate effect may depend on which priorities schools choose to act on, since some corrective actions may have more impact than others.

The team's response to the second question is that other schools will be able to successfully conduct a *School Study* and find it valuable. Most field-test schools efficaciously conducted the study as outlined, at least to a logical interim point of completion, and most participants felt that the process was worthwhile. Another supporting argument for favorable replication is that field-test schools customized the *School Study* process in several ways—such as by writing the report in a group forum, interviewing more students or teachers than the minimum, involving a district writing leader on the Steering Committee, rating as a whole group if warranted by faculty size, beginning priority work during the rating meeting, and assigning planning to more than one entity. As well as contributing to improvements in the *School Study* handbook, these adaptations demonstrated the *School Study's* malleability to individual school needs, evoking Berman and McLaughlin's (1975) concept of *mutual adaptation* (Hord, 1987). Finally, the *School Study* is a targeted study, designed around 36 indicators of successful writing programs that were identified and replicated in many Kentucky schools. Thus, it provides an incentive for schools to evaluate their program by an established set of criteria. Yet at the same time, because most of the indicators are not exclusive to Kentucky's writing program, the study is equally applicable to schools across the nation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are based on the conclusions drawn in this report. They are intended to guide implementation decisions of the Kentucky Department of Education and AEL, Inc.

Recommendation 1. Based on favorable outcomes in most field-test schools, the *School Study of Writing Instruction* is recommended for ongoing implementation in Kentucky schools. Performing this study promotes the practices of faculty collaboration in school instruction and of making informed decisions based on systematically collected data. Its use also reinforces the importance of including the voices of all school stakeholders, especially students, in school change efforts.

Recommendation 2. Given the time required to conduct the *School Study of Writing Instruction*, the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) and local administrators should consider supporting schools that undertake the study with stipends and/or release time. Also, schools should be urged to begin the *School Study* no later than the first of February to avoid competing demands on faculties' time.

Recommendation 3. Facilitator assistance is beneficial and advantageous for maximizing schools' use of the *School Study*. It is recommended that external facilitators be identified, trained, and made available to schools in the fall of 1999. The availability of facilitators will be an opportunity for introducing the *School Study* to schools in addition to being an enhancement to its implementation.

Recommendation 4. Although the *School Study* is an optional intervention, KDE should consider taking steps to identify and encourage low-performing and continuously declining schools to undertake it, which might include providing intensive facilitation beyond the usual level.

Recommendation 5. The collaborative research team should monitor the progress of future schools that undertake the *School Study*. The team should continue with plans to assess the changes in writing scores of participating schools in Year 5 of the Kentucky writing project.

Recommendation 6. A reconfigured "Table of report sections and data" should be included in the final *School Study of Writing Instruction* handbook to increase the representativeness of schools' reports.

Recommendation 7. All other revisions to the *School Study* handbook as listed in Table 13 should be made to enhance its overall usability and representativeness. These revisions include a modified time estimate for conducting the *School Study*; modified time estimates for certain study steps; changes to the orchestration and procedure of certain study steps, mainly the interviews; redesigns to some of the steps; and alignment of indicators between various forms.

Recommendation 8. The *School Study of Writing Instruction* should be developed as a stand-alone product, not only for Kentucky writing programs, but for writing programs nationwide.

Recommendation 9. The research into indicators of successful writing programs as the basis for the *School Study of Writing Instruction* may be considered a model for development of other curricular needs assessment instruments (AEL, 1997a; AEL, 1997b; Coe et al., 1999a, 1999b). Not all of this research base is specific to writing instruction; some parts are generic to teaching, learning, and school efficacy. Thus the *School Study* may be easily adapted as a self-study needs assessment for content areas other than writing.

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APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A:

Table of Observed Score Differences, t-Values, p-Values, and Significance Levels of All Indicators Between the Continuously Improving and Continuously Declining Schools

Table of Observed Score Differences, t-Values, p-Values, and Significance Levels of All Indicators Between the Continuously Improving and Continuously Declining Schools

Variable Name	Variable Label	Observed Score Diff.	t-Values	p-Values	Significance Level
Q1A	Administrative support--district level	2.165	3.414	.002	Sig. at .01
Q1B	Administrative support--school level	1.929	3.326	.003	Sig. at .01
Q2A	Professional development for writing leaders--building	2.912	5.233	.0001	Sig. at .0001
Q2B	Professional development for writing leaders--district	2.521	4.225	.0001	Sig. at .0001
Q2C	Professional dev. for portfolio accountable teachers	2.310	4.057	.0001	Sig. at .0001
Q2D	Professional development for other teachers	1.943	4.002	.0001	Sig. at .0001
Q2E	Professional development specific to content areas	2.402	4.439	.0001	Sig. at .0001
Q2F	Teacher training and participation in portfolio scoring	1.595	3.165	.004	Sig. at .01
Q2G	Ongoing mentoring/informal professional development	2.736	5.237	.0001	Sig. at .0001
Q2H	Strategic collaboration in professional development	2.350	3.841	.001	Sig. at .001
Q3	Coordination across grade levels and subject areas	2.286	5.459	.0001	Sig. at .0001
Q4	School climate/communication	2.711	5.926	.0001	Sig. at .0001
Q5	Communication with families	1.312	2.604	.017	Sig. at .05
Q6	Use of community resources	3.149	4.696	.001	Sig. at .001
Q7	Focus and intensity of the writing instruction program	2.990	5.827	.0001	Sig. at .0001
Q8	Use of *Writing Portfolio Teacher's Handbook*	1.640	2.780	.010	Sig. at .01
Q9A	Focus on writing vs. portfolios only	2.432	4.408	.0001	Sig. at .0001

Table of Observed Score Differences (continued)

Variable Name	Variable Label	Observed Score Diff.	t-Values	p-Values	Significance Level
Q9B	More challenging work required	2.746	6.961	.0001	Sig. at .0001
Q9C	Student confidence of reaching *proficient*	1.857	2.969	.008	Sig. at .01
Q10A	Student description of writing process steps	2.267	3.953	.001	Sig. at .001
Q10B	Student awareness of portfolio evaluation criteria	1.964	3.667	.002	Sig. at .01
Q10C	Use of computer to facilitate writing	1.412	3.323	.003	Sig. at .01
Q10D	Use of feedback to improve writing	2.357	4.231	.0001	Sig. at .0001
Q11A	Evidence teachers write and share with students	1.120	1.799	.083	Not Sig.
Q11B	Evidence teachers introduce adult life writing	2.632	5.415	.0001	Sig. at .0001
Q11C	Evidence teachers write frequently and independently	2.833	8.872	.0001	Sig. at .0001
Q12	Student choice of topics and format	1.643	3.068	.005	Sig. at .01
Q13A	Student opportunity for real-world writing	2.526	6.003	.0001	Sig. at .0001
Q13B	Student awareness of audiences	2.190	4.634	.0001	Sig. at .0001
Q14A	Reading used as a source of ideas	2.462	4.831	.0001	Sig. at .0001
Q14B	Mechanics taught in context of writing	1.344	2.238	.036	Sig. at .05
Q15	Consistency of messages from teachers	2.175	5.094	.0001	Sig. at .0001
Q16	Student awareness that long-term process	1.571	2.632	.014	Sig. at .05
Q17	Consistency among students/teachers/administrators	1.929	3.297	.003	Sig. at .01

Reprinted from Parrish et al. (1999b).

APPENDIX B:

Indicators of Successful School Writing Programs in Kentucky: Executive Summary of Preliminary Findings

Indicators of Successful School Writing Programs In Kentucky:

Executive Summary of Preliminary Findings

A joint project of Appalachia Educational Laboratory and the Kentucky Department of Education

For the past two years, a collaborative study team of researchers has been visiting schools across Kentucky in an attempt to answer this question:

> What practices and conditions produce consistent improvement in students' portfolio writings, as measured by the KIRIS portfolio assessment?

They've interviewed more than 100 teachers, 200 randomly selected students, and 50 administrators in schools with various writing success rates—some consistently successful in raising scores, others consistently unsuccessful. Members of the research team include staff from the Appalachia Educational Laboratory (AEL), along with staff and consultants from the Kentucky Writing Program.

This first phase of the five-year study—a joint project of AEL and the Kentucky Department of Education—seeks to identify indicators of high performance. This report summarizes the conditions most frequently observed in the more successful schools. Scores improved consistently in these schools over a four-year period beginning in 1992, although beginning scores were not necessarily high. The study examines whether schools evolve through a common sequence of instructional practices and conditions as they grow increasingly effective in writing instruction. Ultimately, the team plans to use the indicators to create a process that schools can use to plan improvements in their writing instruction. Department staff also will use the information to evaluate and plan future professional development offerings.

The following indicators are those most frequently observed in schools that improved writing portfolio scores over two consecutive accountability cycles. The research team regards these indicators as tentative until confirmed by further data collection and analysis.

Tentative Indicators Reflecting School/District Support of the Writing Program

- The district demonstrates commitment to the writing program by
  - allocating resources to professional development or technical assistance;
  - assigning program oversight to qualified personnel and allocating sufficient time for effective oversight;
  - compensating cluster leaders through additional pay or released time; and
  - in some districts, establishing policies requiring portfolio completion for promotion or graduation.
- The principal actively supports writing instruction by providing resources, technical assistance, and/or professional development, and by providing substitutes to allow teachers to meet together to score portfolios.
- A high degree of collegiality is evident among teachers. Portfolio scoring is a team event featuring discussion of instructional gaps, weaknesses, and strengths evident in student writing.

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- Language arts teachers at the accountability grades are confident of their understanding of writing portfolio requirements; all have received professional development in the writing process, portfolio development, and scoring. They use *The Writing Portfolio Teacher's Handbook, 2nd Edition,* and feel they have reliable sources of information and assistance when needed.
- School writing leaders are satisfied with the level of training and support they have received to assist other teachers with portfolio development.
- Most language arts teachers at the non-accountability grade levels participate in professional development on writing instruction and portfolio development.

Tentative Indicators Reflecting Instructional Strategies

- Students write frequently in all subjects, and the writing is integrated into instruction.
- Teachers in most grades and content areas give writing assignments that have the potential of contributing to students' "working portfolios."
- Teachers promote peer conferencing as well as student-teacher conferencing; students feel comfortable receiving help from and providing help to other students.
- Teachers spend substantial time on prewriting activities.
- Teachers focus on developing writers rather than developing portfolios so that, when it is time to put a portfolio together, students have a number of pieces from which to choose, most of which were written as a natural outcome of their studies.
- Teachers provide latitude for students to choose topics and/or formats when they write.
- Teachers model parts of the writing process as they work with students.
- The mechanics of writing (grammar, spelling, punctuation) are taught in the context of writing, rather than as unrelated drills and worksheets. Lessons are crafted to address needs evident in student writing.

Two indicators are less frequently observed, but appear to have a powerful impact on students:

- Students write for "real-world" audiences and for real purposes. These audiences read and respond in some fashion to the writing.
- Teachers share their own writing with students and invite students' critiques.

Students Talk About Their School Writing Experience

An important part of the study is the student interview. Students were interviewed to assess the effect of school conditions and practices on student attitudes and behavior with respect to writing. Students talked about their school writing experience and their perceptions of themselves as writers. In schools with continuously improving portfolio scores, student, teacher, and administrator accounts of writing instruction were highly consistent.

In schools with continuously improving portfolio scores, students commonly

- speak of themselves as writers, rather than students who must complete writing assignments;
- speak of writing as a routine part of their school day, rather than as separate tasks done to produce a portfolio;
- expect that writing competence will be necessary in adult life, whatever career path they may follow;
- describe substantive ways their writing has improved from one year to the next, including choice of topics, organization, use of supporting details, spelling, grammar, and punctuation;
- express confidence that most students—including themselves—can become proficient writers with sufficient effort;
- work with their peers on a regular basis to improve their writing—asking questions to clarify the author's intent, as well as giving and receiving suggestions for improvement;
- carry a folder of written work—their "working portfolio"—with them from year to year, and use it either to compare earlier work with current writing or to develop earlier work for current portfolios; and
- are familiar with the Kentucky benchmarks for novice through distinguished writing and use the vocabulary of the writing process.

To learn more about the preliminary findings in this study,* visit AEL's web site at http://www.ael.org/rel/state/ky/kyrpt97.htm.

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*A collaborative research project begun in 1996, conducted by staff members of Appalachia Educational Laboratory, the Kentucky Department of Education, and the Kentucky Regional Writing Consultants. A report of the preliminary findings was written in November 1997.

This publication is based on work sponsored wholly or in part by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U. S. Department of Education, under contract number RJ96006001. Its contents do not necessarily reflect the views of OERI, the Department, or any other agency of the U. S. government.

APPENDIX C:

Various Data Sources
(Principal's Feedback form, Steering Committee Member Feedback form [two versions], Phone Interview Protocol for Steering Committee Chairs)

PRINCIPAL'S FEEDBACK
Kentucky School Study of Writing Instruction

School name ____ **Date**____________

Thank you for helping with the field test of this study. Please take a few minutes to give us your reaction to it, so that we may identify areas that need to be improved and how widely it should be disseminated.

****

1. Do you feel the writing program profile produced by the study is an accurate picture of your writing program's strengths and weaknesses? If not, what do you think may have caused the inaccuracy?

2. Do you feel the outcome of the study was worth the effort?

3. How do you expect the study has benefitted or will benefit your school?

4. What, if any, improvements or other suggestions can you offer to strengthen this study process?

January, 1999

STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBER FEEDBACK
Facilitated field test
Kentucky School Study of Writing Instruction

Position (ex. Teach 9th grade social studies) ______________________________________

School name ____ **Date** _________________

We appreciate your help in field testing the School Study of Writing Instruction. Now that you have completed the study, please write brief responses to the questions below. We will use your experience to improve the process before it is prepared for a wider use.

1. Please estimate the total amount of time you personally spent on matters having to do with this study from its beginning to its end.

2. Please list the the task(s) that required the most time and estimate how much time each of these required.

3. How many steering committee meetings did you hold? What was done at each?

4. Do you think you could have carried out this study without outside help? What, if any, tasks would have been difficult without outside assistance?

5. Do you feel the writing program profile produced by the study is an accurate picture of your school's writing program's strengths and weaknesses? If not, what inaccuracies were there and what about the process do you think may have caused them?

6. Do you feel the outcome of the study was worth the effort required to complete it?

7. How do you feel the study has affected or will affect the school?

8. Which parts of the study process do you consider most helpful? Why?

9. Which parts of the study process do you consider least helpful? Why?

OVER

10. What, if any improvements or suggestions (other than those previously mentioned) can you offer to strengthen this study process?

11. Did you look at the sample report included with the study handbook? If so, was it helpful? Would you recommend that it continue to be included with the handbook?

January, 1999

STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBER FEEDBACK
Independent field test
Kentucky School Study of Writing Instruction

Your position (ex. 5th grade l.a. teacher) ____

School name ____ **Date** ________________

We appreciate your help in field testing the School Study of Writing Instruction. Now that you have completed the study, please write brief responses to the questions below. We will use your experience to improve the process before it is prepared for a wider use.

1. Please estimate the total amount of time you personally spent on matters having to do with this study from its beginning to its end.

2. List the the task(s) that required the most time and estimate how much time each of these required.

3. How many steering committee meetings did you hold? What was done at each?

4. At which points (if any) in the study did you need to contact someone with questions? Which tasks (if any) did you feel the need for more assistance than was available?

OVER

5. Do you feel the writing program profile produced by the study is an accurate picture of your school's writing program's strengths and weaknesses? If not, what inaccuracies were there and what about the process do you think may have caused them?

6. Do you feel the outcome of the study was worth the effort required to complete it?

7. How do you feel the study has affected or will affect the school?

8. Which parts of the study process do you consider most helpful? Why?

9. Which parts of the study process do you consider least helpful? Why?

10. What, if any, improvements or suggestions (other than those previously mentioned) can you offer to strengthen this study process?

11. Did you look at the sample report included with the study handbook? If so, was it helpful? Would you recommend that it continue to be included with the handbook?

January, 1999

5/13/99

Phone Interview Protocol for Steering Committee Chairs about the Field Test of the *School Study* . . .

Planning

1. How many planning meetings did the Steering Committee hold?

2. Who presented/explained the manual to the Steering Committee? How did she/you go about it?

3. What types of things did the Steering Committee do in their planning meetings? For instance, did they preassign faculty small groups in preparation for the faculty rating session (step 3)?

Interviews (step 1)

4. Was choosing the interviewer(s) easy or hard? How many interviewers did the Steering Committee choose?

5. Was the Committee able to employ random selection of teacher interviewees as described in the manual, or did they have to "modify the randomness" of the selection process in order to ensure a cross section of different types of teachers?

6. Were students interviewed individually or in groups? How well did it work?

7. Were the interviewers able to stay within about a class period per interview? How long did it take them altogether to do the interviews? How long did it take to type the interviews (and compile the teacher and student interviews onto one form each, if this was done)?

Report (step 2)

8. How long did it take each Steering Committee member to complete her/his section of the report? How long did the typing and compiling of the complete report take?

Rating Session (step 3)

9. Describe the rating session. How long did it take? How far did the faculty get – did they get to the school profile, to preliminary work on setting priorities perhaps . . . . .?

Priorities and Actions (step 4)

10. (Priorities, part 1 of step 4): Did the faculty-at-large or separate committee set priorities?

Other

11. How many were on the Steering Committee? What is the estimated total time per individual Committee member spent during this process, including time spent in individual reading of the manual, preparation for meetings, etc.? What step/activity seemed to take the most time?

Phone Interview Protocol for Steering Committee Chairs about the Field Test of the *School Study* . . ., p. 2

12. What was the time frame for the total process, e.g., four weeks? five weeks?, from the time that the Steering Committee was formed until the "end" of the study (The end may be defined as the faculty rating session, setting priorities, or planning actions, depending on how far the school progressed.)?

13. Do you have any questions for me?

APPENDIX D:

Time & Task Summary

Time and Task Summary

What is the task?	How long does it take?	Who does it?
Select people to be interviewed, schedule interviews, select and, if necessary, train interviewers	? Time depends on ease of recruiting interviewers and on whether training is necessary.	Steering committee
Complete an interview about writing instruction	About one hour for each interview	Four to 8 teachers and their interviewers (persons from outside the school)
Interview a random sample of 8-12 students (total) from the accountable grade, previous and following grades.	About four hours Students can be interviewed in groups of two or three. Each interview takes 30 to 45 minutes.	Students and interviewer(s) (person or persons from outside the school.)
Gather data about resources available to the school's writing program	About one hour	Principal or his/her designee
Interview principal and district administrator	One hour each	Steering committee member(s)
Develop a summary report, using survey results, resource inventory and student interviews.	One to two hours per person	Steering committee members and additional people, if needed
Make copies of the report for all faculty members.	One to two hours.	Support staff persons.
Prepare to lead faculty meeting to assess writing program	One hour	Steering committee
Using the report, assess school's strengths and needs on the analysis form provided.	Three hours	Entire faculty led by the steering committee[1,2]
(Optional) Prepare to facilitate faculty meeting to choose improvement priorities. Copy materials needed in meeting.	One hour	Steering committee
(Optional) Decide on improvement priorities.	Three hours	Steering committee and faculty

[1] The faculty will work in small groups on different sections of the analysis form. This approach deepens the faculty's understanding of their writing program's strengths and needs and increases commitment to improvements.

[2] Schools that are so large that it is unworkable to include all faculty in this meeting can select a representative sample of teachers from each department or grade. A group of 18 to 24 people is adequate to complete the rating task. However, try to include as many teachers as possible in order to build understanding of the writing program across the faculty.

APPENDIX E:

Report Form

2report.f

School Study of Writing Instruction
Report Form

NAME OF SCHOOL: ______________________________

REPORT COMPLETED: (Month) ____________________ (Year) __________

NAMES OF PEOPLE WHO DEVELOPED THIS REPORT:

____________________ ____________________

____________________ ____________________

____________________ ____________________

____________________ ____________________

See the guide for completing this report before beginning work.

When completed, make copies for all faculty members and distribute.

2report.f

Indicators of Writing Portfolio Improvement

1. **Administrative support**

   a. District level

   b. School level

Other (information other than that obtained through the study):

2. **Availability and effective use of quality training/technical assistance**

A. Training of writing leaders

- Building level

- District level

Other:

B. Training of portfolio-accountable teachers (language arts teachers in departmentalized schools; otherwise, all teachers responsible for teaching writing at the accountable grade level)

Other:

2report.f

C. Extent to which all teachers are trained in writing instruction

a. Administrator perspective:

b. Teacher perspective:

Other:

D. Attention to writing that is appropriate for content areas other than language arts:

a. Administrator perspective:

b. Teacher perspective:

Other:

E. Teacher training in scoring

a. Administrator perspective:

b. Teacher perspective:

Other:

F. Portfolios scored by a team of teachers with diverse membership (more than just accountable grade or English teachers)

a. Administrator perspective:

b. Teacher perspective:

Other:

2report.f

G. Evidence of mentoring/informal professional development

a. Administrator perspective:

b. Teacher perspective:

Other:

H. Level of strategic collaboration in professional development

a. Administrator perspective:

b. Teacher perspective:

Other:

3. Coordination

A. Coordination across grade levels including between elementary and middle school; middle and high school

a. Administrator perspective:

b. Teacher perspective:

Other:

B. Coordination across subject areas

a. Administrator perspective:

b. Teacher perspective:

Other:

4. **Supportive school climate** and easy, frequent communication among staff

   a. Administrator perspective:

   b. Teacher perspective:

Other:

2report.f

5. Evidence of **communication with families** about writing instruction and family support of the writing program

   a. Administrator perspective:

   b. Teacher perspective:

   c. Student perspective

Other:

6. Evidence of **use of community resources** in the writing program

   a. Administrator perspective:

   b. Teacher perspective:

c. Student perspective:

Other:

2report.f

7. **Focus and intensity** of writing instruction programs and degree to which writing and/or writing portfolios are a clear school priority

a. Administrator perspective:

b. Teacher perspective

Other:

2report.f

Instructional strategies

8. Use of *The Writing Portfolio Teacher's Handbook, 2nd Edition* as a resource by all teachers teaching writing

   Teacher perspective:

Other:

9. Evidence that teachers and students focus on **writing**

   A. Evidence that portfolios are not the sole focus of the writing program

      a. Teacher perspective:

      b. Student perspective:

Other:

B. Evidence that students speak of themselves as writers rather than simply completers of writing assignments

Student perspective only:

Other:

C. Evidence that students have the opportunity to compare current writing with writing completed earlier—even in previous years—and can describe how their writing has improved

a. Student perspective:

b. Teacher perspective:

Other:

D. Evidence that teachers require more challenging work from students than they once did because students come better prepared

a. Student perspective:

b. Teacher perspective:

Other:

E. Evidence of students' confidence that they can eventually reach proficiency

Student perspective only:

Other:

10. Evidence that students routinely use the writing process and know the steps in the process.

A. Students refer to the steps in the writing process when talking about their own writing.

Student perspective only:

B. Students are aware of criteria for judging portfolios (and ways in which they learned these criteria)

a. Student perspective:

b. Teacher perspective:

Other:

C. Use of computer to facilitate writing

a. Student perspective:

b. Teacher perspective:

Other:

D. Use of feedback to improve writing (conferencing with teachers, family, or other students)

a. Student perspective:

b. Teacher perspective:

Other:

11. Teacher writing

A. Evidence that teachers write and share their writing with students (writing assignments, journal writing, etc.)

a. Teacher perspective:

b. Student perspective:

Other:

B. Evidence that teachers introduce students to the many functions of writing in adult life

a. Teacher perspective:

b. Student perspective:

Other:

12. Evidence of student choice of topics and formats for particular writing assignments

    a. Teacher perspective:

    b. Student perspective:

Other:

13. Evidence of real-world writing

A. Evidence of students having the opportunity to use writing for real-world purposes

    a. Teacher perspective:

    b. Student perspective:

Other:

B. Evidence that students are aware of the audiences they are writing for and that the audiences are important to them

a. Student perspective:

b. Teacher perspective:

Other:

14. Evidence that writing instruction is integrated into general instruction

A. Teachers assign reading as a source of ideas and models for writing for a variety of purposes

a. Teacher perspective:

b. Student perspective:

Other:

2report.f

B. Mechanics taught in context of writing

a. Teacher perspective:

b. Student perspective:

Other:

15. Evidence of consistency of the messages students receive about writing from different teachers

    a. Student perspective:

    b. Teacher perspective:

Other:

16. Consistency among student/teacher/administrator perspectives (overall)

APPENDIX F:

Rating Guide

3rating.g

SCHOOL STUDY OF WRITING INSTRUCTION
RATING GUIDE

I Administrative support

A. **District level**—Administrative support includes any formal or informal evidence that the district administration gives the writing program high priority in the district curriculum. Such support may look different from district to district depending on the resources of the district, the number of central office staff, and local history and culture. The key criterion is that, for this district, consistent effort is going into proactive encouragement of the writing program.

High—The district supports the program by seeking district policies intended to stimulate writing improvement, encouraging and supporting school initiatives to improve writing (e.g., providing funds for professional development above that expected by the state, providing release time for mentoring), recruiting and/or training expert, facilitative central office staff to provide technical assistance and mentor school staff, organizing portfolio scoring for the district to ensure accuracy, organizing cross-school or cross-grade conversations about writing instruction.

Medium—The district supports the program by providing assistance to schools in support of the writing program that is perceived by the school staff as more facilitative than is provided in other curriculum areas (for instance, encouraging schools to provide more training for teachers than is generally expected but requiring them to use school professional development funds for the purpose), identifying some of the more successful practitioners to facilitate the writing program at the district level.

Low—The district does only the minimum required by the state, assigning portfolio oversight to personnel who lack clear qualifications or successful practice, maintaining bureaucratic oversight of schools' writing programs with little or no technical assistance.

> Example of a medium to low district we have visited: The district had a cluster leader who served as mentor to the writing leader in the school but subsequently assigned that staff member to a different assignment that prevents her from visiting schools and mentoring writing leaders. The district encourages schools to use their professional development funds to send the writing leader and intern teachers to intensive professional development workshops not available to most teachers but does not make any district funds available for the purpose. No stipends are provided, but expenses are paid—in sharp distinction to what is provided for "extra" professional development in other areas.

B. **School level**—Administrative support includes any formal or informal evidence that the school administration gives the writing program high priority in the school curriculum.

High—School administrators provide active leadership; changing schedules to allow additional time for planning, conferencing or dialogue among teachers or time for instructional aides or volunteers to conference with students; providing extra time and/or payment for lead teachers, encouraging generous allocations for professional development and instructional resources in writing in the school budget and finding additional funds when needed to take advantage of unanticipated opportunities; participating in professional development with teachers; serving as readers for student writing, participating in portfolio scoring, initiating efforts to bring student work to real world audiences.

> Example from a school we visited: To illustrate that active principal leadership need not always be hands-on, we visited a school where the principal did not personally participate in the writing program but encouraged teachers at all grade levels to take as much training as possible in the writing process and in portfolio development. In addition, he persuaded the school council to allocate a full-time aide to the fourth grade, to allow extra planning time for fourth-grade teachers and an additional adult to conference with students about their writing. He delegated full responsibility for the writing program to the fourth-grade teachers, who were regarded as the school's writing leaders, but he made sure they had more resources than teachers at other grade levels (for instance, were able to take more field trips if they felt it was necessary for the writing program) and celebrated the creative ideas they had to stimulate student writing and to share that writing with real-world audiences for purposes that were important to the students.

Medium—School administrators make sure that teachers are provided with up-to-date information, professional development and hands-on technical assistance from competent district staff; provide release time or stipends for extra duties associated with the writing program, such as portfolio scoring; allow and encourage teachers to participate in professional development over and above that called for in the school's P.D. Plan; but let the central office take the lead in encouraging the writing program and do not change the school's staffing or organization to improve the writing program.

> Example: We visited a high school where the principal had no direct involvement in the writing program but rather delegated responsibility for encouraging the program to an assistant principal and the cluster leader. The cluster leader took the initiative to approach the KDE Writing Program to answer questions she had about whether particular types of real-world writing were appropriate to include in the portfolio, and she was able to involve non-language arts teachers in the writing program to an unusual degree, but primarily on the basis of her own reputation in the school, not administrative support.

Low—School administrators obey state directives at a minimum level, perhaps monitoring implementation of the writing program without actively assisting in it, failing to encourage professional development in writing for most teachers and providing no special resources to enhance writing instruction or portfolio development.

2. Availability and use of quality professional development/technical assistance

This indicator refers to the **entire writing program**, not just portfolio development and/or scoring. Consider both **formal** and **informal** opportunities. **Formal professional development** denotes planned experiences led by one or more experts in the field. **Informal professional development** denotes mentoring relationships, coaching, electronic networks, peer dialogues about writing instruction sustained over time, technical assistance provided on request to individual teachers. The first three items below ask for a global assessment of the quality and quantity of professional development (in the broad sense) received by teachers at the school. The remaining items under this heading require judgments about specific types of training or informal professional development opportunities of particular interest to this project.

A. **For writing leaders** (cluster leaders or other teachers assigned responsibility for the writing program)

—BUILDING LEVEL

High—Writing leaders are encouraged to participate in much more than the minimum professional development on writing expected of those in their positions; they seek out appropriate conferences and workshops to attend, have a support network (within the district, with peers in other districts, with consultants, and with KDE Writing Program staff, and have sources of on-demand technical assistance and/or coaching, which they find helpful. In turn they provide more training and support than is expected of them to the teachers with whom they work and encourage them to seek additional professional development in writing (strengthening their own skills by instructing others).

Medium—Writing leaders are encouraged to seek out appropriate conferences, workshops, and technical assistance but are unable to avail themselves of all appropriate opportunities because of school or district limitations (e.g., financial limits, isolation, lack of substitutes, etc.) or personal limitations (e.g., a demanding family situation). Opportunities to share what they have learned with teachers in the school may also be limited, for some of the same reasons. They have a limited support network to call on.

> Example: One teacher in the school is the designated writing program leader and is encouraged to attend conferences and workshops but has limited knowledge of what is available. She has never attended the summer workshop at Western Kentucky University, for instance, even though the district is less than 200 miles from Bowling Green. One or two people in or near the district constitute her support network and sources of information; not being a cluster leader, she does not have access to the networking resources provided through the state department of education. She has structured the school's writing program around writing instruction in her own field (Title I), and she clearly understands the writing process better than any of the teachers with whom she works.

Low—Writing leaders have attended the minimum amount of professional development on writing expected of people with their responsibilities. They have either not sought or have not had the support necessary to participate in additional training. They have formed no support networks. They have provided minimum support to other teachers in the school.

B. For **portfolio accountable teachers** (teachers responsible for teaching writing at the accountable grade; in departmentalized schools, teachers of language arts)

High—Teachers responsible for writing at the accountable grade level have participated in much more than the minimum professional development on writing expected of those in their positions (including training in portfolio scoring). They attend conferences, have a support network and are able to use on-demand technical assistance and/or coaching, which has been helpful. They feel some responsibility to let other teachers who are less accountable for student portfolios know how to work with students to improve portfolios.

Medium—Only some teachers of writing at the accountable grade level have received extensive training; others have had professional development in the writing process and in portfolio scoring but tend to rely on a few leaders, who have developed a support network to rely on and who are willing to support the less involved teachers.

Low—Writing teachers have attended the minimum amount of professional development on writing expected of people with their responsibilities (if they are cluster leaders) or no more professional development than most other Kentucky writing teachers (if they are not cluster leaders). They have either not sought or have not had the support necessary to participate in additional training. They have formed no support networks. They have provided minimum support to other teachers in the school.

C. For **other teachers** (Other teachers include both teachers in subject areas other than language arts and language arts teachers in non-accountable grades.)

High—Interviewees reported that teachers have participated in much more than the minimum professional development on writing expected of those in their positions (often because the school or district has sponsored extensive inservice professional development in the writing process). They attend conferences, support one another routinely, and have resources for on-demand technical assistance and/or coaching which they find helpful.

> Example of teachers supporting one another routinely: The primary teachers at one elementary school we visited have worked together to design and develop a cumulative portfolio, starting with only a few pieces in the first year of the primary program and adding additional pieces each year so that students leaving the primary program and

entering fourth grade have a full working portfolio. The fourth-grade teachers work closely with the primary teachers to help them develop these working portfolios, and students report that putting together their final primary portfolio was a more rigorous learning experience than putting together the final, fourth-grade portfolio.

Medium—Most teachers interviewed have participated in workshops or other professional development on the writing process and on scoring portfolios, but content area teachers or teachers at other than the accountable grade level make little use of the training, as they depend on writing teachers at the accountable grade level to take primary responsibility for the writing program and for portfolios. There is minimal networking, as writing teachers talk with other teachers about what they can do to strengthen students' writing skills and their portfolios.

> Example: At most of the departmentalized schools we have visited writing in the content areas has been the most problematic part of the writing program even when the content area teachers were convinced that writing was important to their disciplines, which they frequently were not. Finding appropriate professional development opportunities has often been difficult. In a high school where the great majority of the content area teachers cooperated willingly with the English department in writing instruction, the English teachers themselves asked that the content area teachers follow the writing process only through the first draft stage. After that, if the piece was considered appropriate for a portfolio, the piece would be sent to the English department and English teachers would work with the student to edit and publish the piece for inclusion in the portfolio. At other high schools, language arts teachers complained that content area teachers would send them writing pieces that simply were not good enough to be included in a portfolio or that were based on inadequate prompts.

Low—Teachers have attended the minimum amount of professional development on writing expected of teachers in their content area or grade. They have either not sought or have not had the support necessary to participate in additional training. They have formed no support networks. They have neither sought nor provided support to other teachers in the school.

D. Attention to writing that is appropriate for content areas other than language arts

High—Recent professional development opportunities for all teachers have featured ways to incorporate writing authentically into content areas other than language arts, and the school writing leader or leaders have followed up with continued technical assistance to help teachers use the instruction. In addition, teachers in content areas other than language arts may have been encouraged to take intensive instruction in writing for their content areas and have subsequently shared what they have learned with others in the school.

Medium—Some but not all teachers have had the opportunity for professional development emphasizing how to incorporate writing into content areas other than language arts. These opportunities may have been made available only to non-language arts teachers who have expressed a particular interest in using writing to enhance their instruction.

Low—There is no evidence that attention to writing that is appropriate for content areas other than language arts has been identified as a school need, and no one appears to be seeking professional development in this area.

E. Teacher training and participation in portfolio scoring

High—Portfolio scoring training is available to all teachers in the school but is voluntary for teachers who are not on the scoring team. The portfolio team includes teachers from subject matters other than language arts and/or from non-accountable grade levels, and the team's membership changes fairly frequently, to encourage participation by any teacher who is interested.

Medium—Only teachers who are on the scoring team receive training in portfolio scoring, the team consists only of those who teach writing at the accountable grade level, and the composition of the team has changed minimally over the years (frequently only as teachers move from one grade level to another or retire).

> Example: One of the schools we visited has a scoring team consisting of all the fourth-grade teachers. Students at all grade levels (primary and upper elementary) are required to keep portfolios, and each grade-level team of teachers scores its own students' portfolios. Teachers at the non-accountable grade levels are trained by the grade-level scoring team, after it has had updated training each spring.

Low—Only accountable grade level teachers score, and they do so in isolation.

F. Evidence of ongoing mentoring and informal professional development

High—Teachers are members of formal teams (subject-matter teams, grade-level teams, primary "families," special purpose teams) that are given adequate time for meeting and planning. In addition, networks with teachers outside the school are encouraged through sending teachers to appropriate professional development opportunities at regular intervals (e.g., professional association annual meetings, summer institutes, and the like), providing e-mail access for electronic networking, providing release time if needed to network with peers outside the school, etc. Informal networking and mentoring within the school is also encouraged and celebrated.

Medium—Teams of teachers within the school are given common planning time, but the teachers report either that it is inadequate for substantive work or that they do not make consistent use of it. Networking with teachers outside the school is possible if a teacher persists in following up opportunities, but is not a school priority. Informal mentoring and networking within the school are tolerated but not encouraged.

Low—There is minimal communication between teachers and administrators, mostly formal communications concerning the school. Teachers seldom talk among themselves about issues of teaching and learning, and any discussion of students' writing is at a superficial level.

G. **Level of strategic collaboration in professional development**—This indicator refers to degree to which the school faculty has participated together and support one another in professional development experiences linked with identified school needs.

High—Teachers show awareness of the professional development plan and its connection with school weaknesses; most have had a part in developing the plan. Professional development is often school-wide. Teachers who attend conferences or workshops beyond school-based professional development attend as representatives of their school and are expected to bring learnings back to their colleagues. Teachers describe instances of giving and receiving help from one another.

Medium—Teachers are aware of the professional development plan but most were not involved in developing the plan and they appear to know the specifics only so far as they are directly affected. Collegiality is encouraged, and there is informal collaboration (self-selected groups who share), but these groups appear to be mutually exclusive and not everyone is included in one. There is no formal mechanism--or encouragement--for teachers to support one another in professional development experiences.

Low—Decisions about what professional development is needed are commonly made individually, and teachers may be unaware of the specifics of the professional development plan developed at the school. When teachers are trained together, they are in role-alike and/or grade-alike groups. Teachers are generally unaware of their colleagues' level of training or expertise, and they are not encouraged or required to share what they learn in workshops with other teachers. They do not mention instances where teachers have helped one another and they do not appear to link identified school needs with professional development.

3. Coordination across grade and subject areas

Since writing is an area in which students should be making steady, ongoing improvement, coordination of the writing program across grade and subject areas is an asset to the program (but is not the norm).

High—In departmentalized schools, teachers from different subject area departments share in the same professional development on writing and compare notes on a regular basis to ensure that the writing program is implemented in a planned, consistent manner to produce integrated, well designed writing instruction. In all schools, teachers from adjacent grade levels compare notes on a regular basis to ensure that writing instruction is consistent as students progress from grade to grade and that student progress in writing is well documented as they move from grade to grade (for instance, through the development of a cumulative portfolio). Feeder schools provide the schools that students move on to with adequate information about each student's progress in writing and meet to ensure that the writing program at the higher level school builds on the program at the feeder school.

Medium—In departmentalized schools, teachers from different subject area departments are encouraged but not required to participate in the same professional development on writing and to confer with one another periodically about the way writing is used in each subject area. Some teachers do this, but others do not. Similarly, teachers at adjacent grade levels may or may not coordinate their writing programs; usually some effort is made to ensure that student writing moves with the student from grade to grade, but the effort is not always successful. Teachers at the accountable grade levels are usually the most conscientious about coordination with other teachers.

Low—No effort is made to coordinate writing instruction across subject areas or across grade levels. Individual teachers may express frustration at the lack of coordination.

4. School climate/communication

This indicator includes any evidence that relationships among administrators, teachers, students, and parents are friendly, collegial, and facilitate the development of the writing program.

High—Frequent, relaxed and cordial communication occurs among administrators, teachers, aides and support staff; with evidence of mutual respect and liking among faculty, staff and students, as well as any parents who may be present; with perhaps evidence from school displays and conversation that writing is valued as a worthwhile and enjoyable activity; teams of teachers who clearly work well together are another sign of a positive school climate.

> Example: An elementary school we visited has a large number of students whose parents transport them to school and some students were consistently tardy. Now the school starts every morning with an assembly to get the day off to a happy, enthusiastic start. Teachers are responsible for planning the assembly, which generally features either a speaker from the local community or students who have done something worth exhibiting. If students are late, it does not disrupt instruction, but students are now pressuring their parents to get them to school on time because they enjoy the assembly, and parents occasionally stay to attend the assembly with their children. The school has an extremely diverse student population, both ethnically and economically, but the administrators and staff reach out to all students and all parents in ways that appear to make all feel welcome and included.

Medium—Cordial but businesslike relationships exist among administrators, teachers, staff, and support aides, with little emphasis on teamwork or meeting the needs of the "whole child"; there may be an emphasis on academic excellence but not on teamwork to produce academic excellence.

Low—Hallway, lunchroom and teachers' lounge conversations are generally unrelated to instruction; minimal and formal communication between teachers and administrators, with support staff always clearly subordinate to teachers; an emphasis on order (and usually silence) in the hallways and in the classrooms, with exchanges between adults and students in non-classroom settings primarily directive rather than social. Hall and classroom displays appear to be mostly adult-created (or "cookie-cutter" student work), with little apparent value given to student writing.

5. **Evidence of communication with families and family support of the writing program.**

High—The school recruits and trains volunteers to help in the classroom (for example, to free teachers for conferencing, to read and give feedback on student writing, to share their own writing, to talk about the kind of writing necessary in their jobs.) In "family night" sessions, through newsletters, or through formal training, the school provides information to families about writing levels expected of students and ways parents can help at home. A conscious effort is made to help parents feel comfortable in the school.

> Example: An elementary school we visited provides classes for parents through the library program. The first class provided last fall was instruction in the writing process and appropriate ways for parents to work with children at home on writing. At the same school, one of the children we interviewed described how she herself had instructed her mother in appropriate conferencing techniques.

Medium—The school provides written information to parents about the writing process and suggests ways they can help students at home with writing assignments, but does not actively recruit parents to help in the classroom. Individual teachers may encourage parents to volunteer in the classroom or give them pointers on how to work with children at home on writing.

Low—Any communication to parents about the writing process stresses what they should not do (e.g., make suggestions that usurp the child's ownership of the writing) rather than active ways they can help. Parents are not encouraged to volunteer in the classrooms, although a few active parent volunteers may be tolerated. No effort is made to explain to parents how a child's writing skills are progressing.

6. **Evidence that the school uses community resources in the writing program**

High—The writing leader actively seeks resources for such programs as having a writer visit the school for a period and work with students on writing as well as explaining how he/she makes a living as a writer. Individual teachers are encouraged to invite into the classroom people in the community who use writing in interesting ways in their adult careers. Such people may also be asked to judge school writing competitions or projects. Community firms or businesses may be asked to support the school's writing program in various ways (for instance, exhibiting student writing or providing prizes for a contest).

Example: Each year at a small town elementary school the fourth-grade students organize a blood drive for the local health department. They make all the arrangements for a blood drive at the school, and then they write persuasive pieces to convince members of the community to participate. Before the drive, they parade through their small town leaving these persuasive pieces at each store, to be distributed to the patrons. They also talk to their parents and neighbors about the blood drive. The blood drive requires expository writing, describing how to organize a blood drive, it leads to research on blood types, the need for blood, and how the blood will be used. Some students write personal narratives or fiction based on the research they have done.

Medium—Individual teachers seek out community resources to enrich the writing program from time to time, but it is not a school priority.

Example: The writing leader at a small, rural elementary school invited the school superintendent to visit the school and talk to the students about the many ways in which writing had played a part in his career. She wanted to find some way to support a writer in residence program but, to date, the visit by the superintendent was the only effort made at the school to use community resources to enhance the writing program.

Low—There is no evidence that community resources are used in the school's writing program

7. Focus and intensity of writing instruction programs

This indicator requires a global assessment of the degree to which writing and/or writing portfolios are a clear school priority.

High—There is abundant evidence that the school communicates to students the importance attached to writing. Student writing is prominently displayed in the hallways and in classrooms, and classroom walls display posters emphasizing various aspects of writing instruction/portfolio development. Interviews with administrators, teachers, and students are consistent in revealing the importance placed on writing at the school—and interviewees agree that writing well is an important life skill. If events outside the control of the school administrators interfere with instruction, an effort is made to ensure that it does not interfere with students' opportunity to work on writing.

Medium—Writing is a clear school priority, but there is a lack of focus in the writing program. Students do not articulate the importance of writing as clearly as teachers and administrators do, or they may reveal ignorance of strategies that teachers report using in writing instruction. There is a clearer focus on portfolio development than on writing as a valuable part of education, and writing may be a focus only part of the year. Teachers may draw a clear distinction between writing assignments meant for the portfolio and other writing assignments. Teachers are ambivalent about the value of writing, on the one hand considering it valuable but on the other hand resenting the time it takes away from other subject matter to do process writing (since writing is not well integrated into instruction).

Low—Writing appears to be stressed only at the accountable grade levels and only for the purposes of developing writing portfolios as part of the state assessment program. Teachers and students resent the demand to assemble writing portfolios and many dislike writing.

8. Use of *The Writing Portfolio Teacher's Handbook, 2nd Edition* as a resource by all teachers teaching writing

This indicator is strongly related to the overall priority placed on writing at the school and the leadership abilities of cluster leaders and other writing leaders in the school. If a school uses a district-produced Handbook rather than that produced by the state Writing Project, it should be examined or described well enough so that a judgment can be made whether it is or is not equivalent.

High—Every teacher in the school received the Handbook and guidance in using it as part of professional development, and the writing leader(s) in the school continue to work with teachers to demonstrate productive uses for the Handbook. Teachers at all grade levels and in all subjects report using the Handbook consistently, though they may turn to the Handbook only during certain parts of the year (for instance, when introducing students to the benchmarks for the various performance levels or when preparing to score portfolios). If they do not turn to the Handbook frequently, they report that they are familiar enough with the content so that they do not need it for general reference purposes any more. Students exhibit familiarity with the benchmarks and the criteria for the various performance levels.

Medium—All portfolio-accountable teachers have copies of the Handbook and use it as described above, and a few other teachers who have a particular interest in the writing process may have been able to get a copy. Other teachers have guides to teaching writing that are not as extensive as the Handbook (often produced by a local writing leader) or have gained their knowledge of portfolio development entirely from professional development workshops. Some teachers are not aware that the full Handbook exists.

Low—Only the teachers who are on the portfolio scoring team have copies of the Handbook, and they refer to it only when preparing to score portfolios.

9. Evidence that teachers and students focus on writing

A. Evidence that developing competent writers, not just portfolios, is the focus of the writing program.

It is to be expected that any school in Kentucky will focus on completing writing portfolios. There should also be a focus on writing for its own sake or as an important part of instruction. A key criterion here is the degree to which portfolio writing is integrated into classroom instruction or is seen as separate from classroom instruction (inevitably interfering with other instruction).

High—Writing is part of instruction at all grade levels and in all subject areas. Writing to learn and writing to exhibit learning are stressed as valuable, in addition to portfolio-appropriate writing. Writing assignments are not differentiated into portfolio assignments and other assignments, and potential portfolio pieces may come from a wide variety of sources, including writing the student has done for non-school related purposes. Students are exposed to a variety of ways in which writing is needed for adult life and in vocational areas. Teachers are conscious of developing their own writing skills and of the importance of students' enjoying writing. Both teachers and students can describe their progress as writers.

Medium—Writing is part of instruction at all grade levels but some subject matter teachers resent any demand that they incorporate writing into their instruction and refuse to do so. There is more emphasis on writing in the accountable grades and during the time that portfolios are being prepared than at other times, although students do some writing throughout the school year and in every grade. Although students speak of themselves as writers and often write when they are not required to for school assignments, teachers generally do not write except when they need to for clearly defined purposes.

Low—Writing is neglected in the school curriculum except for the preparation of writing portfolios—and sometimes for practice in answering open response questions. Writing assignments are clearly identified as portfolio assignments and are not integrated into instruction.

B. Evidence that teachers require more challenging work from students than they once did because students come better prepared

High—When asked to account for the improvements in student writing, most teachers mention that writing has been well taught in previous grades so they are able to work with students at a much higher level than previously. Both teachers and students describe particular assignments that require more than students previously would have been asked to do at that grade level.

Medium—Teachers report that student writing has improved over the years and that they now require more of students than they used to, but add that some students have always had the capacity to do the work now required and that some students come to them still lacking the skills to do the work they now require.

Low—Teachers report that teachers at previous grade levels have not done a good job of teaching writing and that this hampers portfolio development because they must spend time working on basics that the students should have learned previously.

C. Evidence of students' confidence that they can eventually reach proficiency

High—All students interviewed at the school report that the portfolio standards are not too high for all (or most) students to reach—though they require hard work from most students. Students may add that not all students are willing to put forth the effort required, but they consider themselves good writers and report that they are making the effort personally. Teachers and administrators agree that most students—over time—should be able to reach the standards and feel responsible for helping them do this. (If teachers see instruction as having impact on the quality of students' writing to become proficient, this probably indicates that the school is higher than "medium" on the criterion, though not at the top of the scale.)

Medium—All or most of the students interviewed at the school report that the portfolio standards are not too high for all (or most) students to reach—though they require hard work from most students. Students may add that not all students are willing to put forth the effort required, but they consider themselves good writers and report that they are making the effort personally. Most teachers have reservations about the ability of some students to become proficient, either because they lack the ability (some have writing talent and some don't) or because they lack motivation or and adequate home environment. (Teachers may give other, less self serving reasons: e.g., the schools will never have adequate support or time to bring all students to the proficient level; or they may criticize the performance level itself, e.g., "proficient" is developmentally inappropriate at my grade level.)

Low—Students express doubt that they will ever become proficient or say that a number of other students will not be able to do so. Teachers have major reservations of the sort described under "Medium."

10. Evidence that students routinely use and can describe the steps in the writing process

A.. Students are familiar with and use the writing process

High—All students interviewed name the essential steps of the writing process, of ten before they are asked to do so, and discuss cogently their importance in the students' development as writers.

Medium—Some of the students interviewed are highly aware of the steps of the writing process and can discuss their importance, while others must be asked fairly specific questions before they discuss them. Most students, however, exhibit some awareness of the various components of the writing process and have gone through them with at least some of their teachers.

Low—Students fail to discuss some steps of the writing process at all (for instance, pre-writing or publication) and generally seem unaware that the various components of the process are important to help them develop as writers.

B. Students are aware of criteria for judging portfolios (and ways in which they learned these criteria)

High—All the students interviewed report that each year one or more teachers reviews the criteria with them, going over and discussing benchmarks or particular pieces of writing that exemplify a particular performance level. Students are given written material reminding them of the criteria for each performance level, and the criteria are displayed or reviewed periodically as portfolios are being prepared. Students may report using the benchmarks on their own initiative to assess their own and others' work.

Medium—All students report having at least one teacher during the accountability year go over criteria for the various performance levels, or the criteria may be displayed but not addressed consistently. Students feel free to ask their writing teachers if they need any additional information.

Low—Students are not introduced to the criteria at all or are presented them in such simplified form that they are not really sure how their writing pieces are going to be judged.

C. Use of computer to facilitate writing

High—The school has sufficient computers so that students may have access to them at all stages of the writing process. Students have learned keyboarding skills at an early age, have access to the Internet at school and use computers to find information; they feel comfortable working on computers. Students have been encouraged to use the computer at all stages of the writing process and have learned from experience that this improves their writing, so most of the students interviewed choose to use the computer at all stages, even if they do not have computers at home.

Medium—The school has sufficient computers so that students may have access to them at all stages of the writing process, but this is a recent development and not all teachers or students have gotten used to it. Students who have computers at home still are more comfortable using the computer than those who do not and are more apt to use the computer at all stages of the writing process, but this is beginning to change, and the teachers are aware that students would benefit from greater use of the computer in writing.

Low—The school either does not have enough computers for all students to use them at all stages of the writing process or they are not yet sufficiently accessible to students. Teachers are generally unaware of the advantages of using the computer at all stages of writing so do not encourage students to do so. Students who have computers at home are at an advantage in using computers for writing than students who do not. Computers at school are used mostly to produce final copy, and some students may not have access to them even for that purpose.

D. Use of feedback to improve writing (conferencing with teachers, family, or other students

High—Teachers and students both report that students conference with peers as well as with teachers as they revise their writing pieces and that the feedback they receive from both sources is helpful. Students show no reluctance to share their writing with peers, even students they may not know well; they say that students at the school all know what sort of questions are helpful. Students share their writing with family members and friends outside of school and ask for their feedback (teaching them how to ask helpful questions, if necessary). Neither teachers nor students report problems that prevent students from receiving as much feedback as they need during the writing process.

3rating.g

Students clearly feel ownership of their writing.

Example: Teachers at one elementary school we visited taught primary students appropriate methods of conferencing and then made it clear that, since teachers and aides were not always available to conference with students, students who needed feedback were to find other students at about the same stage of composition and request a conference. Before they entered fourth grade, students had developed the habit of independently seeking feedback from other students as they worked on writing pieces. It was understood that they were supposed to do this, and they had the freedom to seek quiet places for the conferencing, including working quietly in the hallways.

Medium—Teachers and students report that students are expected to seek feedback from other students as well as teachers, but most students exhibit some reluctance to share their writing during intermediate stages. They may report avoiding conferencing with other students or seeking feedback only from close personal friends or students they trust to give good feedback. Teachers as well as students report that students seem to get more out of conferencing with teachers than out of conferencing with peers. They may have developed systems to increase the amount of time available for students to conference with adults (for instance, increase the amount of time instructional aides can spend working one-on-one with students) but still feel there is a problem finding enough time for conferencing with students.

Low—Even if teachers report that students do peer conferencing, the students report that they are seldom required to do this and that they can successfully avoid it most of the time. Teachers have little time to conference with students when they need help at various stages of the writing process, and they have not developed systems for increasing the amount of time instructors or aides are available to provide feedback to students. When they—or parents—do provide feedback, it tends to be primarily directive, so that students sometimes feel a piece of writing is no longer their work.

11. Teacher writing

Teachers who are not confident of their own ability as writers will presumably have difficulty helping students become proficient. Teachers who write with students appear to have a powerful effect on students' interest in writing and confidence that they can become proficient.

A. Evidence that teachers write and share their writing with students

High—All teachers interviewed at the school can describe instances when they temporarily abandon the role of "teacher" to write with students. Often this will be journal writing, but to rate a "high" rating on this attribute, teachers should be able to describe other occasions on which they write at the same time as the students—or when they complete a writing assignment they have given students and share their writing at the same time that students are sharing.

Medium—Some of the teachers interviewed can describe instances when they write with students—but this is usually journal writing only. Some teachers report that they occasionally share with students a piece of writing that is appropriate for a writing assignment the students have been given. Students describe these instances also—and may actually remember instances of teachers writing with them that the teachers themselves do not describe to the interviewer, but it is clear that such instances are occasional.

> Example: The power of teachers sharing their own writing with students was illustrated vividly during interviews with three ninth grade students in a rural school district in central Kentucky. When asked if they remembered any of their eighth grade teachers sharing writing with them in class, all three ninth graders (two girls and a boy) recalled that their eighth grade language arts teacher read a personal narrative that she wrote about her granddaughter. The students remembered the teacher's narrative as being interesting. That particular teacher retired at the conclusion of the school year and much happened to the trio of students in their ninth grade (the interviews were conducted in May), still they quickly recalled the time she shared a personal piece of writing with them in the previous school year.

Low—Neither teachers nor students describe any instances of teachers writing with students, other than writing on the chalkboard and requiring students to copy what they have written.

B. Evidence that teachers introduce students to the many functions of writing in adult life

High—Teachers report that they frequently talk with students about the ways they use writing in their everyday life and point out adult accomplishments that require writing. From time to time, they invite adults in a variety of occupations to the classroom to discuss the role of writing in their work. Students are aware of a large number of ways in which writing is needed in adult life and can describe them to the interviewer.

Medium—Some of the teachers interviewed discuss specific instances in which they brought to students' attention the need for writing in one adult role or another. On rare occasions, an adult may have been invited to the school to enhance writing instruction by talking about the role of writing in their life and work. Students are aware that they will need to write as adults and can describe to the interviewer at least a few ways they anticipate writing as adults.

Low—There is no evidence from either teachers or students that there is any discussion in the school of the role of writing in adult life and work.

12. Evidence of student choice of topics and formats for particular writing assignments

High—All teachers interviewed at the school report that most assignments provide students with choice (appropriate to the subject area). Some assignments provide students with a format and a range of subjects within a particular prompt, but others allow students to choose the format to address a particular topic or allow for choice of both format and topic. Students are also encouraged to add to their writing folders pieces they have written not for school assignments but for real world purposes outside school. Students agree with the teachers that they have many opportunities for choice of both format and topic in their writing and that most teachers give them opportunities for choice.

Medium—Most teachers interviewed report giving assignments that specify format and the general topic area but allow students to make specific choices within the general area. Teachers may provide students with a list of possible topics or may brainstorm possible topics with the class and allow students to select from the list or choose a similar topic themselves. A few teachers report giving students a greater range of choices than this. Students agree with the teachers' reports.

Low—All teachers interviewed report giving students a very narrow range of choices (for instance, specifying format and giving student three possible topics to choose among). Many writing assignments allow for no choice at all. Students agree that they exercise very little choice in their writing.

13. Evidence of real-world writing

A. Evidence of students having the opportunity to use writing for real-world purposes

High—Teachers interviewed report that students have frequent opportunities to write to real audiences and that these communications are intended to have actual results (for instance, letters to the school board asking for specific improvements in the building or the lunch program, or pamphlets—later delivered—explaining the school's rules to an entering class). Students tell detailed stories about this type of writing, including the purpose for writing, what they wrote and why, and what the response was.

> Example: In one elementary school we visited, students were assigned to write to their parents prior to Christmas to ask for a particular present the child wanted very much. The letters were mailed to the parents, and the children were able to tell the interviewer how his/her parents had responded to it.

Medium—Teachers report a variety of assignments to write to real audiences, but the letters are generally informational and not intended to produce particular results (for instance, letters to pen pals in other states or other countries). Teachers may also report a variety of assignments to write for imaginary audiences and may not differentiate sharply between the imaginary and the real audiences, understanding both as "real world writing." Students' accounts agree with those of their teachers, except that students are normally quite aware which audiences are imaginary and which are real.

Low—Neither teachers nor students mention writing for real world purposes to actual audiences at all, and they do not describe such writing even when specifically asked about it. Teachers either do not understand the term "real world writing" or describe writing for imaginary audiences when asked about it.

B. Evidence that students are aware of the audiences for which they are writing and that the audiences are important to them

High—Students discuss audience when asked to describe the writing process, and they differentiate clearly between imaginary or abstract audiences and actual audiences. They describe clearly what real audiences they have addressed in their writing, how they shape their writing to the audience, and why they think it's important to communicate with those audiences. They report that teachers expect them to incorporate pieces they have written to real audiences for real world purposes in their writing portfolios.

Medium—Most students talk about audience only when prompted by the interviewer, but it is clear that they do write at least occasionally to audiences who read what they write. Students may or may not be able to describe the audiences' reaction to what they wrote and may or may not think it is important to communicate with those audiences.

Low—Neither teachers nor students report writing to real audiences as part of the writing program. Teachers may describe imaginary audiences in response to questions about real audiences.

14. Evidence of integration of writing instruction into general instruction

A. Teachers using reading as a source of ideas and models for writing for a variety of purposes

High—Teachers and students who are interviewed consistently talk about reading (in language arts or any of the other subject areas) as models for writing in that area and as a source of ideas for formats and topics.

Medium—Some teachers and students who are interviewed can talk about particular ways in which classroom reading has served as a source of ideas for formats or topics or as a model of a type of writing.

Low—Teachers and students discuss writing as totally separate from reading and do not draw the connection even when asked about reading as a source of ideas for writing.

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B. Language arts teachers teach mechanics in context of writing

High—Teachers and students who are interviewed report that mechanics are taught in the context of writing, primarily in mini-lessons designed to fit writing needs as they are identified. Students speak of improved spelling and punctuation as part of the overall writing process.

Medium—Teachers report that they are trying to fit mechanics in the content of writing, but what is taught usually is determined by the textbook rather than by student needs. They report reinforcing these lessons in the context of particular writing assignments or stressing in the lessons mechanics they know will be important to upcoming writing assignments.

Low—Teachers report teaching mechanics (spelling and grammar) as separate subjects. In teaching mechanics as drill, they follow the order of the textbook and do not make a special effort to teach mechanics with which students are having difficulty in their writing assignments.

15. Evidence that students receive consistent messages, consistent with Kentucky Writing Program principles, from different teachers

High—Teachers interviewed at the school talk about the writing program as an integrated whole, even if teachers in different subject areas have different contributions to make to it. Their description of the objectives and progress of the writing program at the school is essentially consistent from teacher to teacher and consistent with the way students describe the writing program.

Medium—A few teachers (usually language arts teachers) take the lead in implementing the writing program and have a clear vision among themselves but the vision is not shared with other teachers; teachers in different subject areas or at different grade levels may have very different conceptions of the school's writing program. Students report different understandings of the school's writing program, depending on the teachers they have, or their account of writing instruction differs from their teachers' accounts.

> Example: In a high school we visited, two language arts teachers appeared to be largely responsible for the school's success in improving portfolio scores. Their students, when interviewed, were articulate about the various steps in the writing process and described challenging, interesting writing assignments, while students of other language arts teachers described only "cookie-cutter" assignments and appeared unaware of the writing process as a whole.

Low—Students may receive consistent messages about writing, but the messages are that writing is not a school priority, and few or none of the faculty teach the writing process in the ways recommended by the Kentucky Writing Program.

16. Consistency among student/teacher/administrator perspectives

This indicator requires a global judgment about the degree to which students, teachers, and administrators told the same story in response to the same or similar questions.

High—There were virtually no inconsistencies in what students, teachers, and administrators had to say; all described the writing program in the same way, discussing a variety of writing assignments and telling revealing anecdotes about writing instruction.

Medium—Students, teachers, and administrators described the writing program in generally similar terms. There were inconsistencies, but for the most part they did not involve key indicators or add up to a grossly inconsistent story. If administrators have a different perception of the writing program, but teachers and students have consistent perceptions, the school is probably in the medium range on this indicator.

Low—Descriptions of the writing program by students and teachers are so different they might have been talking about different schools. Administrators may tell the same basic story as the teachers, or they may have a different perception of what is going on than the teachers.

APPENDIX G:

Rating Form

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SCHOOL STUDY OF WRITING INSTRUCTION
Directions for completing rating form

Before filling out the form, review the school report. Your judgments about some, if not most, of the indicators will come from your assessment of the cumulative information as well as from information about a specific indicator. To make judgments, you need to look at the range expressed, particularly at the degree to which students and teachers agreed in their understanding of the writing program. Widely disparate responses between role groups (administrators and teachers, teachers and students) alert you to areas that need closer scrutiny.

The response requires marking a point on a sliding scale with an "x" to indicate the degree to which your school typifies an indicator. Mark any point on the line except the vertical (dividing) lines. It is tempting to mark all categories "average," so avoid the exact center of the line unless you are convinced the school is absolutely average for that indicator. Also, it is very unlikely that the school would warrant the same "mark" for every indicator, so try to make independent ratings for each indicator. Where you have insufficient information to make an assessment, check the line so indicating.

The indicators include descriptions of high, medium, and low performance. These descriptions should serve as guides, not as criteria that must be present to justify a particular rating. To illustrate this, we have added some slightly offbeat descriptions of schools visited as this study process was developed.

REMEMBER: This analysis is intended only to help you strengthen your school's writing instruction. No one outside the school sees it. Be honest in your assessment.

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SCHOOL STUDY OF WRITING INSTRUCTION
RATING FORM

Note: Use rating guide for explanation and examples of the indicators.

School____ Date:__________________

1. Administrative support

A. District level

Insufficient Information ____ Low___/___/___/___/___/___/___High

B. School level

Insufficient Information ____ Low___/___/___/___/___/___/___High

2. Availability and use of quality professional development/technical assistance

A. For writing leaders

Insufficient Information ____ Low___/___/___/___/___/___/___High

B. For portfolio accountable teachers

Insufficient Information ____ Low___/___/___/___/___/___/___High

C. For other teachers

Insufficient Information ____ Low___/___/___/___/___/___/___High

D. Attention to writing that is appropriate for content areas other than language arts

Insufficient Information ____ Low___/___/___/___/___/___/___High

E. Teacher training and participation in portfolio scoring

Insufficient Information ____ Low___/___/___/___/___/___/___High

F. Evidence of ongoing mentoring and informal professional development

Insufficient Information ____ Low___/___/___/___/___/___/___High

G. Level of strategic collaboration in professional development

Insufficient Information ____ Low___/___/___/___/___/___/___High

3. Coordination across grade and subject areas

Insufficient Information ____ Low___/___/___/___/___/___/___High

4. School climate/communication

Insufficient Information ____ Low___/___/___/___/___/___/___High

5. Evidence of communication with families and family support of the writing program.

Insufficient Information ____ Low___/___/___/___/___/___/___High

6. Evidence that the school uses community resources in the writing program

Insufficient Information ____ Low___/___/___/___/___/___/___High

7. Focus and intensity of writing instruction programs

Insufficient Information ____ Low___/___/___/___/___/___/___High

8. Use of *The Writing Portfolio Teacher's Handbook, 2nd Edition* as a resource by all teachers teaching writing

Insufficient Information ____ Low___/___/___/___/___/___/___High

9. Evidence that teachers and students focus on writing

A. Evidence that writing is the focus of the writing program, not just portfolios

Insufficient Information ____ Low___/___/___/___/___/___/___High

B. Evidence that teachers require more challenging work from students than they once did because students come better prepared

Insufficient Information ____ Low___/___/___/___/___/___/___High

C. Evidence of students' confidence that they can eventually reach proficiency

Insufficient Information ____ Low____/____/____/____/____/____/____High

10. Evidence that students routinely use and can describe the steps in the writing process

A. Students are familiar with and use the writing process

Insufficient Information ____ Low____/____/____/____/____/____/____High

B. Students are aware of criteria for judging portfolios (and ways in which they learned these criteria)

Insufficient Information ____ Low____/____/____/____/____/____/____High

C. Use of computer to facilitate writing

Insufficient Information ____ Low____/____/____/____/____/____/____High

D. Use of feedback to improve writing (conferencing with teachers, family, or other students

Insufficient Information ____ Low____/____/____/____/____/____/____High

11. Teacher writing

A. Evidence that teachers write and share their writing with students

Insufficient Information ____ Low____/____/____/____/____/____/____High

B. Evidence that teachers introduce students to the many functions of writing in adult life

Insufficient Information ____ Low____/____/____/____/____/____/____High

12. Evidence of student choice of topics and formats for particular writing assignments

Insufficient Information ____ Low____/____/____/____/____/____/____High

13. Evidence of real-world writing

A. Evidence of students having the opportunity to use writing for real-world purposes

Insufficient Information ____ Low____/____/____/____/____/____/____High

B. Evidence that students are aware of the audiences for which they are writing and that the audiences are important to them

Insufficient Information ____ Low___/___/___/___/___/___/___High

14. Evidence of integration of writing instruction into general instruction

A. Teachers using reading as a source of ideas and models for writing for a variety of purposes

Insufficient Information ____ Low___/___/___/___/___/___/___High

B. Language arts teachers teach mechanics in context of writing rather than separate from writing

Insufficient Information ____ Low___/___/___/___/___/___/___High

15. Evidence of consistency of messages students receive about writing from different teachers

Insufficient Information ____ Low___/___/___/___/___/___/___High

16. Consistency among student/teacher/administrator perspectives

Insufficient Information ____ Low___/___/___/___/___/___/___High

APPENDIX H:

School Profile Graph

School Profile

1 A	1 B	2 A	2 B	2 C	2 D	2 E	2 F	2 G	3	4	5	6	7	8	9 A	9 B	9 C	10 A	10 B	10 C	10 D	11 A	11 B	12	13 A	13 B	14 A	14 B	15	16

Questions

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APPENDIX I:

Findings by Field-Test School

FINDINGS BY FIELD-TEST SCHOOL

The following discussion is an expanded account of each field-test school's experience in conducting the School Study of Writing Instruction. The 5 facilitated schools were each assigned a facilitator to guide them through the process. The 6 independent schools were each assigned a contact person to help them via telephone.

Condition 1: Facilitated Schools

Facilitated School #1

Description of FS1's study process. FS1 completed its school study in 9 weeks during an 11-week period between February 24 and May 13, 1999 (the study was suspended for a week each of spring break and state testing). The assistant principal of FS1 began calling the facilitator in December, asking when they could get started. Approximately 8 weeks elapsed from the time of this first contact until they started on February 24; FS1 would have begun on February 5 but agreed to postpone to accommodate the schedule of another field-test school who needed the facilitator. The facilitator reported that the assistant principal and Steering Committee of FS1 possessed a wonderful attitude about conducting a self-study of their writing program, willing to do anything to improve it. She said that they probed deeply for information because they wanted an accurate portrayal of their writing program. Also, they took the initiative of including input from their feeder school in their self-study. The Committee contacted the facilitator few times, more often to verify scheduling of steps in the process and to communicate the school's progress than to request assistance. Most contacts between them were via e-mail. The Committee did call once about a problem receiving the stipend. The facilitator stated that the Steering Committee could have done the study without her assistance because of the interest level of the assistant principal and the other Steering Committee members and, particularly, the assistant principal's interest in progress for all grades and content areas. She stated, "They really didn't need me."

The Steering Committee consisted of 5 members: the assistant principal, 3 faculty, and 1 parent. The facilitator's log described the Steering Committee's preparedness at the various steps in the process. At the first meeting with the facilitator, the Committee reviewed the *School Study* handbook. According to the facilitator, the Committee had begun before she arrived, during which time the assistant principal had covered the first section of the handbook with the rest of the Committee. She also observed that the attitude of the Steering Committee was positive. In a phone interview, the assistant principal indicated that the facilitator had presented the handbook well. Also, he stated that the handbook was systematic, easy to follow, and needed—they used everything in it.

Eight teachers and 12 students were interviewed in 2 consecutive days, teachers one day and students the next. Included in the teacher sample were two teachers from FS1's feeder school, who were interviewed via written survey instead of verbally. The assistant principal interviewed teachers because it was convenient in terms of scheduling. Two parents, one of them on the Steering Committee, interviewed students in groups of 2-3, except for one individual interview. In a phone interview, the assistant principal said that interviewing students took more time because it was harder to extract information from them, but it was doable within a 51-minute class period. The assistant principal, rather than the principal, completed the principal interview (in written survey form) since he was more familiar with the writing program. It is unclear whether a district administrator was interviewed; it appears as if the assistant principal also completed this interview (also in written survey form). The Steering Committee chair aggregated all teacher responses onto one form. Student responses were not aggregated; however, as most were interviewed in groups, responses of interviewees in the same group were recorded on one form. None of the interviews were typed.

The Steering Committee members chose to write the report in a meeting, rather than individually. At the request of the facilitator, they held the meeting at another school's computer lab. FS1 participants were prepared to write when they arrived on March 15, having read the completed interviews beforehand. According to the assistant principal's feedback, this meeting lasted 3 hours and was the longest of all their meetings. The report was typed during this meeting as it was being composed.

The assistant principal intended that all faculty should be at the rating meeting, which meant that it had to be held during school hours and arrangements made for student supervision. The meeting was originally scheduled when students would be at an outdoor event; however, it was delayed for 10 days due to a district mandate that students not be outside in the wake of the Columbine High School shooting in Littleton, Colorado. Although the facilitator had intended to be present, she was not apprised of the date of the rescheduled meeting until after it had taken place.

The rating meeting lasted 2½ hours. The assistant principal reported that they had encountered difficulty reaching consensus once the small groups had reassembled into a large group.

The Steering Committee of FS1 had an original idea for the conclusion of the rating meeting. The Committee created a brief reflection form that it asked all participating faculty to complete individually. The form asked faculty members (1) *what they had learned from the report* and (2) *what they had learned from the rating process*. Eighteen faculty responded.

In answer to question one, *what they learned from the report*, 18 responded, some with multiple responses. The most frequent response to question 1 was the realization that teachers' and students' perspectives vary about what students are learning (7 responses). (They did not specify in what ways the perspectives varied.) The second most frequent response was the statement that both administrators and teachers are concerned about improving the writing program or student writing (4 responses). Several other responses concerned writing program needs that had surfaced: help for content area teachers outside language arts to participate in the writing program (3 responses), computers (3), better student understanding of the writing process (2), better student understanding of benchmarks (2), more time and teacher training for writing program improvement (1), and parent and community involvement (1).

In answer to question two, *what they learned from the rating process*, 18 responded, some with multiple responses. Four respondents said that they learned that the school was doing better in its writing program than expected (i.e., "good," "average," or "doing better than anticipated"). Five said the same, but added that the writing program still needed improvement. Seven more respondents simply stated that the school's writing program needed improvement. Of the total 12 respondents who indicated that the writing program needed improvement, 8 gave examples, the most frequently mentioned element for improvement being training and technical support for collaboration with content area teachers outside language arts (4 responses).

Following the faculty rating meeting, both parts of step 4 of the study, setting priorities and planning actions, were assigned to the school's Consolidated Planning Committee. Regarding completion of the school study, the facilitator expressed faith in FS1's ability to do so because of the leadership she observed in them. The assistant principal's closing thoughts on the study process were that it was useful for discovering aspects of the writing program and it gave the faculty data which they would use, saying that the most beneficial outcome was the illumination of the program's status at different grade levels.

Principal and Steering Committee feedback forms from FS1. Following the completion of their school study, each of the 5 Steering Committee members returned a feedback form. In lieu of the principal feedback form, the assistant principal filled out the same Steering Committee feedback form as the others. The principal did not complete the principal feedback form because the assistant principal had been the administrator most closely associated with the *School Study* process. Of the 5 feedback forms received, 3 were missing the second page containing questions 5-9, because it had apparently been inadvertently overlooked in the copying of the form.

In response to question 1, *what was the respondent's personal time spent to conduct the study*, 1 respondent said 10 hours, 3 respondents said 8-10 hours, and 1 said 12 hours. In response to question 2, *which tasks in the School Study required the most time*, 1 said participating in Steering Committee work and interviewing, 3 said the report, and 1 said both the report and interviewing. So the report was mentioned four times and interviewing twice. In the phone interview, the assistant principal reported that compiling the report was the most cumbersome task of the study, partly because the computer program that they had used was not compatible with the forms provided on disk. He felt that 3 hours for the report-writing meeting was too long.

In response to question 3, *how many Steering Committee meetings were held*, the Committee held 4 meetings prior to the faculty rating session. Since one of them was the report-writing meeting, only 3 of these meetings would be considered specifically planning meetings.

In response to question 4, *whether they could have carried out the study without outside help*, 3 Steering Committee members said yes and 2 said no. To the second part of question 4, *what tasks would have been difficult without outside help*, 2 named the initial overview and setup of the study process, 2 named compiling the report, and 1 named both of these aspects of the study.

Due to the copying error mentioned above, responses to questions 5-9 were given by only 2 of the 5 respondents. In answer to question 5, *whether the school profile was an accurate picture of their* *writing program's strengths and weaknesses*, 1 judged it to be semi-accurate, but was not as sure being a parent, and 1 said that it was, because it illustrated problems that they had already suspected. In answer to question 6, *if the outcome of the study was worth the effort*, both said yes, 1 adding that they now had data to support future planning. In answer to question 7, *how the study had affected or would affect the school*, 1 said through planning and changes to the writing program; and 1 said it had affected the school already by having identified problem areas at the feeder school, and, in the future, it would affect the school through professional development and moving writing responsibilities to all grade levels. In answer to question 8, *which parts of the study process were most helpful*, 1 said the student perspectives as discovered through interviews, and 1 said both the interviews and report, because of the comparison between the various role groups' perspectives produced by these documents. In answer to question 9, *which parts were least helpful*, both respondents said none.

Question 10 solicited *suggestions for improvement to the study process*. Two said none were needed and 1 respondent left it blank. One suggested simplifying some of the written procedural language and 1 suggested clarifying interview questions, as some of the interviewees' answers were vague.

Question 11 asked about *the utility of the sample report as an aid to report writing*. Four respondents said it was helpful and recommended continuing to include it in the *School Study* handbook. One said it was somewhat helpful.

Reliability of FS1's report. FS1 submitted interviews from all role groups, including 8 teacher interviews and 10 student interviews, plus a teacher interview compilation, and the report. Although student interviews were not compiled onto one form, responses of interviewees in the same group were recorded on the same form, each student's responses designated by a number; therefore, four forms containing the responses from a total of 10 students were submitted. Although two separate forms were submitted for administrator interviews, it is possible that the assistant principal served as both the principal and district administrator interviewee. Finally, it should be noted that FS1 omitted 2 topics from its report (topics 9D and 9E), so only 3 of the chosen 5 could be considered.

The reliability examination revealed that FS1's 3 report responses were *partially equivalent* to the 3 corresponding items in the reviewer's sample in terms of accuracy and breadth of the number of data points considered, but with less detail. Two contained descriptive detail, yet 1 did not have enough for adequately summarizing and characterizing aspects of the writing program. In 2 of the 3 topics, one possible major data point was omitted. The responses contained no misrepresentations of data. In sum, although the 3 report responses under scrutiny did contain a few helpful points of information, the responses were too brief, 2 containing only a one-sentence statement for one of the role groups. Finally, the "Other" space was not utilized in the 3 responses, but it was used in a few instances in the remainder of the report for recording additional information.

Facilitated School #2

Description of FS2's study process. FS2 conducted its self-study in 5 weeks between February 24 and March 31, 1999. Six and ½ weeks elapsed from the time of the facilitator's first call to the school in mid-January and the start of the study. The first meeting between the Steering Committee and the facilitator, originally scheduled for February 5, was postponed by FS2 on late notice until February 24. According to the facilitator's report at the May progress meeting and her log, FS2's school study began unfavorably for a number of reasons. First, after the principal greeted her, he did not participate in the study process. Second, the Steering Committee was composed of 8 people, which the facilitator thought was too many. Third, when she arrived at their first meeting, several Committee members did not know why they were there. Fourth, no one wanted to be the Steering Committee chairperson. The obvious choice would have been the writing leader; however, she had recently left the school. The position was forced on the Title I teacher due to her flexibility to be out of the classroom and the fact that she was now the writing leader. She reluctantly accepted the chairperson responsibility, according to the facilitator.

The 8-member Steering Committee was composed of the Title I teacher, language arts and other content area faculty, and 1 parent. The *School Study* progressed in a disorganized way, according to the facilitator. The facilitator initiated all calls and e-mail contacts. She reported that the Steering Committee chair never contacted her with questions or to request additional assistance. She did, however, receive a call from the district office, which was receiving bills from the school for the stipend; apparently, the school experienced a delay obtaining it. When the facilitator arrived for meetings, the Committee was unprepared. They would spend the beginning of meetings copying sections of the handbook that should already have been copied in total, distributed to, and read by the Steering Committee members. Thus meetings typically began 30 minutes late. The HSE participated in the study process, which provided the Committee with a measure of support, according to the facilitator.

The chairperson reported that the Steering Committee had originally scheduled a teacher to be the interviewer, but the substitute became ill and canceled. Therefore, the Steering Committee chair performed the teacher interviews (again, because she had no regular classroom). Eight teachers were interviewed. In preparation, the Committee had retained substitutes for the interviewees so that teachers would not be forced to use their planning periods. An unusual technique she employed was to interview teachers in pairs, which was not intended or suggested in the handbook (the collaborative research team believed that individual teacher interviews were more conducive to teachers speaking freely). She accomplished the teacher interviews in 1 day, adding that it was especially difficult without a scribe.

Two parents—one of them a Steering Committee member—conducted student interviews.[18] The Steering Committee chair said that they chose parent(s) rather than school staff to be interviewers, based on their assumption that parents would be more likely to elicit honest responses from students. Twelve students were interviewed in groups of 3 over the course of 1 day, the day before the teacher interviews. Interviewers were able to interview each student group comfortably within 1 class period.

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[18] The facilitator believed that one parent, with the HSE serving as scribe, performed the interviews since this was the arrangement decided upon in a meeting; however, the Steering Committee chair's account is accepted for this discussion since she was the person most involved with the study throughout the process.

The facilitator expressed dismay about the interviews, feeling that interviewers did not probe beyond asking the questions once, despite the facilitator having practiced interviewing with Steering Committee members at their first meeting. The Steering Committee chair was displeased with the teacher interviews for a different reason: she felt that some teachers gave incorrect responses because they do not understand what *writing* is, i.e., "worksheets are not writing." Thus the Steering Committee chair felt that to be a true study, all teachers, including those more knowledgeable of the writing program, should have been interviewed. On the other hand, she was pleased with student interviews, assessing their responses to be honest overall. However, she felt that some students did not understand the phrasing of the questions and that rephrasing questions so students would understand was difficult for interviewers to do.

After interviewing teachers, the Steering Committee chair also accepted the task of aggregating the teacher interviews and student interviews onto one form each, reporting that "it took *hours* to collapse the interviews." As writing portfolios were being scored during that time, she had to stay after school until 7:00 or 8:00 p.m. every day for a week to compile and type the two sets of interviews.

FS2 wrote its report in a meeting of the Steering Committee in its computer lab. However, according to the facilitator, the computer lab was not adequately set up beforehand. Also, because the software was not compatible with that on the disk, report writers had to retype the headings on the report form as they worked. The report-writing meeting lasted 3 hours. According to the Steering Committee chair, because the report sections had been completed by various writers in three to four different software programs, she had to retype all sections of the report later to create the entire document.

A Steering Committee meeting for the purpose of planning the faculty rating meeting, held shortly after the report-writing meeting, was disorganized like previous meetings in the facilitator's assessment. The facilitator reported that several Steering Committee members still did not know their purpose for being there. Steering Committee members still had not been provided with a complete handbook; the section that the Committee should have read prior to this planning meeting was provided to members only at the start of the meeting. The meeting began 15 minutes late because some Steering Committee members arrived late and some had to leave the meeting to retrieve their copy of the report. Several had not read the report. The facilitator reported that, due to these circumstances, this meeting took much longer than necessary (slightly over 3 hours).

The faculty-wide rating meeting was also poorly planned and progressed in a disjointed fashion. It lasted approximately 2 1/4 hours. The rating session began 30-45 minutes late because some faculty left to buy refreshments, others arrived late, and many came without their report copy and had to leave to find it. As had been the case for Steering Committee members during the study process, the facilitator observed that the faculty in general did not know the purpose of the rating meeting and had not read the report beforehand. The principal attempted to explain the reason for the session; the facilitator then clarified the purpose more fully. The HSE attended the meeting and also spoke to the faculty, telling them that the *School Study* would be valuable for their future planning. The facilitator believed that she sensed negativity among the faculty.

At the meeting, the rating results were displayed on enlarged version of the school profile, a method devised by the facilitator. The facilitator recorded several faculty impressions and comments generated during discussion and written reflections. In general, she said that the teachers were not surprised that administrators did not know what was happening relative to the writing program, as shown on the school profile. Also, teachers were surprised to discover the existence of a longstanding district policy requiring the development of writing portfolios in nonaccountable grades.

Fifteen specific comments from faculty discussion were recorded by the facilitator in her log, revolving around a few themes. Five comments were reactions to the rating results in general or to a specific aspect of them, 2 of which questioned the validity of report and rating results as an accurate depiction of their school's writing program, e.g., "'The way I see things at this school are very different at times than what the survey shows.'" Three comments reflected faculty's perceived need for professional development or doubt about personal ability to effectively teach writing, e.g., "'We are a novice overall so how can we develop distinguished writers? I'm novice so that's why I don't teach writing as such [at the distinguished level].'" Three reflected a desire to help students, e.g., "'We need a more positive attitude to benefit our students. I hope the results will really help them.'" Three reflected concern that the timing of the study was poor for having a meaningful influence on the writing program, saying it should have been conducted earlier in the school year. Finally, one comment was idiosyncratic.

Following the rating meeting, the facilitator participated in a debriefing with the Steering Committee. Several members expressed a wish for more time to have completed the study. They felt rushed due to other school demands. One individual reiterated the belief expressed in the faculty meeting that interview responses did not faithfully represent the school's actual practices in carrying out the writing program, but she/he did not specify in what ways the responses were unrepresentative.

The Steering Committee told the facilitator that they planned to assign step 4, setting priorities and actions, to another committee. Sometime after the rating meeting, the HSE left his post at the school. The facilitator stated that minus HSE support, she is dubious about FS2's willingness to progress to step 4, despite the intention to designate a committee to set priorities and actions. She was not abreast of FS2's progress after the rating meeting. In a phone interview with another member of the research team, the Steering Committee chair reported that FS2 would be waiting until the 1999-2000 school year to do step 4 and did not mention having designated a committee.

Principal and Steering Committee feedback forms from FS2. The principal completed a feedback form approximately 3 months after the completion of the study. In response to question 1, *whether the writing program profile was an accurate picture of FS2's program's strengths and weaknesses*, he said yes, because it was written by a group of teachers rather than a few. In response to question 2, *if the outcome of the study was worth the effort*, he answered "definitely," because it gave the school a picture of strengths and areas needing increased emphasis. In answer to question 3, *how the study had benefited or would benefit the school*, he said by effecting changes in the writing program that would prepare students for success in state testing, their future education, and life. In response to question 4, *what were suggestions for improving the School Study process*, he said yearly reviews [of the writing program] and adjustments based on state testing results.

Seven of the 8 Steering Committee members returned a feedback form. An overview of them indicated that some Steering Committee members had duplicated others' responses: responses from 5 of the 7 forms were wholly or partly verbatim, 2 even in the same handwriting.

In response to question 1, *what was the respondent's personal time spent to conduct the study*, 2 respondents said 20+ hours, 2 said 16 hours, 1 said 30-40 or more, 1 said 25 hours to date, and 1 said 12 hours. In response to question 2, *which tasks in the school study required the most time*, respondents most frequently listed interviews and compiling the report. One respondent, the Steering Committee chair, logged many hours at various tasks: interviews—12 hours, report preparation (including compiling interviews)—20-25 hours, and pulling it all together—10-12 hours. Also listed by respondents were surveys/interviews, the introductory Steering Committee meeting (somewhere between 3 and 6 ½ hours), and the rating session (3 hours).

In response to question 3, *how many Steering Committee meetings were held*, the Committee held 2 Steering Committee planning meetings and a report-writing meeting prior to the faculty rating session, then a debriefing meeting following the rating session.

In response to question 4, *whether they could have carried out the study without outside help*, 4 said yes, 2 said no, and 1 said they possibly could have used less help but doubted their ability to do it had they had no help at all. To the second part of question 4, *what tasks would have been difficult without outside help*, the 2 respondents who had answered "no" said procedures and getting headed in the right direction.

In answer to question 5, *whether the school profile was an accurate picture of their writing program's strengths and weaknesses*, 5 said no [2 in capital letters] and 2 said yes. To the second part of question 5, *what inaccuracies were there and what about the study process may have caused them*, 2 said the [interview] questions did not match the [report] analysis; 1 said the teacher sample was not representative since some of the teacher interviewees selected randomly did not truly understand the meaning of *writing*; 1 similarly felt that several teachers did not understand the questions, rendering them useless; and 3 did not provide any insights.

In answer to question 6, *if the outcome of the study was worth the effort*, 5 said no (4 in capital letters) and 2 were undecided at that point pending follow-up and outcomes. One of these latter 2 respondents was the parent member of the Steering Committee.

In answer to question 7, *how the study had affected or would affect the school*, 5 said "not in the least" or something similar, 2 of these respondents saying its only effect was to increase already existing confusion and a third saying, "Like everything else, it will soon be forgotten." One said it showed them what was and was not happening in their school related to writing. One respondent, the parent, said that there was no effect yet, but hoped that the study showed teachers what areas needed work and showed school personnel the need to work together; this respondent added that students should always come first, that teachers' attitudes affect students, and that improved attitudes would help the school.

In answer to question 8, *which parts of the study process were most helpful*, 4 said none—it was a waste of time or useless; and 3 mentioned an aspect of the interviews—illustration of no continuity from the top, discrepancies between teacher and student responses ("eye-opening"), or honesty by students.

In answer to question 9, *which parts of the process were least helpful*, 2 said all, 2 left it blank, 1 said none, another said none— as long as study outcomes would be implemented eventually, and 1 said the teacher interviews because the interviewees either misunderstood the questions or were not candid in their replies.

Question 10 solicited *suggestions for improvements to the study process*. Two suggested more time to complete it; 1 suggested more time, training, preparation, and money. Three gave no suggestions, 2 stating that they saw no benefit to conducting the study. One respondent, again the parent, suggested that the facilitator explain in more detail to the Steering Committee the expectations of them and the benefits of the study so that the Committee would not feel it was a waste of time.

Question 11 asked about *the utility of the sample report as an aid to report writing*. Four recommended not including it in the handbook in the future, 2 saying it was misleading. Two found it helpful and suggested continuing to include it. One response was ambiguous.

Reliability of FS2's report. FS2 submitted a compilation of 8 teacher interviews and a compilation of 12 student interviews, as well as 2 administrator interviews.

All 5 of the report topic responses examined were brief. Three of the 5 responses (to topics 9A, 9B, and 9E) were *entirely or approximately equivalent* to the reviewer's sample in accuracy and breadth of data items considered, 2 omitting only a minor data point. The 3 responses incorporated enough detail for summarizing and characterizing aspects of the writing program, but they were still concise. The report contained less detail overall than the reviewer's. One of the report responses was *partially equivalent*, having omitted a major data item, and finally, one of the responses was *barely equivalent*, showing much less breadth of data considered and misrepresenting data in the direction of inflated self-appraisal. The "Other" space was used in only 1 of the 5 report topics under scrutiny, but was used frequently elsewhere in the report for recording additional information. The reviewer's overall assessment of FS2's report, based on the 5 topics considered, is that it was sufficient though abbreviated. The assessment of several faculty expressed at the rating meeting was that the report was not representative of their writing program.

Facilitated School #3

Description of FS3's study process. FS3 carried out the self-study in 6 weeks between March 23 and May 6, 1999, including 1 week of spring break. Five weeks of phone calls and a 5-day postponement by the facilitator between February 18 and March 23 prefaced the start of the study. The facilitator at FS3 supplied much assistance to the school; its study began on her initiative, but was eventually organized and completed by the Steering Committee. The facilitator called several times before she was able to speak to the principal. The principal then organized the Steering Committee but without informing the members. Therefore, at their first planning meeting, Steering Committee members did not understand why they were there. The principal later delegated responsibility for the study to a staffperson and did not participate in the study process.

The Steering Committee was composed of 5 members and was headed by the guidance counselor and Title I teacher, both of whom assumed responsibility for most of the work in the study process. Substitute teachers were hired to cover Steering Committee members' time out of class. Throughout the process, the facilitator initiated all contacts with FS3; the Steering Committee never called the facilitator for assistance beyond the services that she offered. However, midway through the study process, the principal called a member of the collaborative research team because FS3 had not yet received its stipend.

At the introductory meeting, the facilitator clarified the *School Study's* purpose and benefits and then reviewed the steps in the process. In this meeting, she overheard comments such as, "'Writing detracts from more than enhances the program,'" and "'Some kids can . . .[write], others can't.'" Also, the facilitator gathered that the Committee perceived the principal to be unsupportive of the *School Study* effort and the district to have given few funds to the school for professional development.

At the next meeting, under the guidance of the facilitator, the Committee selected interviewers and interviewees and set dates for the remaining tasks in the process. The facilitator was asked to interview the principal and district administrator. The co-chairs of the Steering Committee, the guidance counselor and Title I teacher, were chosen to do all the teacher and student interviews. The Committee felt that outside interviewers were not qualified to interview, that no parents would, and that they did not want the Family Resource Center staff to do it. Because the co-chairs had participated on a large number of committees and written several reports during the tenure of the HSE, they felt equipped to do the interviewing themselves. Also, they felt responsible for the task since they had been appointed by the principal to conduct the study. This planning meeting lasted 4 ½ hours, although the facilitator had projected only 1 hour for it.

The Committee decided to interview more teachers than called for given the school's size in order to include language arts teachers in several grades and other content teachers in accountable grades. In a phone interview, one of the co-chairs (and co-interviewers) reported that teacher interviews tended to take longer, sometimes running over a class period by a few minutes. Some interviews appear to have been completed as written surveys rather than verbal interviews. Next, the interviewers conducted student interviews with groups of 2-3 students, which reportedly worked well even with shy students. The student alternates as well as the originally selected interviewees were interviewed; the total number of students interviewed is unknown. The co-chair reported that special education students were hesitant to answer and needed encouragement. Also, some questions had to be rephrased for lower functioning students. Their assessment of the student interviews was that responses from various students correlated and that lower functioning students hate writing. All teacher and student interviews were spaced over a 3-week period. The guidance counselor and attendance clerk shared the typing, which took approximately 4 days.

The facilitator interviewed the principal via telephone because of her geographic distance from the school. The proposed district administrator interviewee declined an in-person interview with the facilitator; instead he submitted responses in writing, which were regarded cynically by the Committee, according to the facilitator's observation.

The second and third planning meetings of the Steering Committee were attended by only the two co-chairs with the facilitator present. The co-chairs also wrote and typed the report themselves, not sharing the task with the other Committee members. The facilitator called to check their progress and answer questions. The co-chairs spent 3 hours typing the report.

The purpose of the third planning meeting was to plan the faculty rating meeting. The facilitator helped direct them to the specific tasks involved in planning this meeting. She shared a handout that listed the activities of the rating meeting, helped them preassign the faculty small groups, and reviewed with them the materials that needed to be ready for the meeting.

The Steering Committee chairs were still preparing for the rating meeting when the facilitator arrived an hour before it began. The facilitator led the rating meeting. One of the co-chairs reported that it lasted approximately 1½ hours, and that three fourths of faculty members attended. The facilitator observed that all participants commented that the responses in the report did not accurately reflect their writing program. Also, in a phone interview, one of the co-chairs noted that some report topics (i.e., indicators) were incongruous in numbering between the report and the rating form and profile. Thus faculty often relied on their own perceptions in addition to the interviews to rate their school. However, in some cases they felt compelled to rate according to the data in the report although they disagreed with it, one example being the district administrator's high valuation of his role in the writing program. As each small group reported its ratings, the facilitator filled in the school profile graph. She felt that the resultant school profile was not representative of the school. She observed that the ratings ranged from low to high scores in an erratic pattern, some being rated too highly, which she somewhat attributed to the confusion caused by the data that contradicted teachers' personal knowledge. In sum, the rating activity presented some complications for the faculty. Nonetheless, according to the facilitator, some productive discussion occurred as a result of these discrepancies. Faculty did generally arrive at some commonalities of understanding about aspects of the writing program to address, despite sometimes having difficulty in reaching consensus.

The Steering Committee chose to assign the priorities and planning step to the school's Consolidated Planning Committee. In the phone interview aforementioned, which occurred several weeks after FS3's rating meeting, the co-chair stated that she did not know if the priorities step had been accomplished yet.

The facilitator was concerned, given the work and after-school time that the Steering Committee members had invested, that they were not confident that they would receive the field-test stipend.

Principal and Steering Committee feedback forms from FS3. The principal completed a feedback form. In response to question 1, *whether the writing program profile was an accurate picture of FS3's program's strengths and weaknesses,* the principal stated that the school profile gave a somewhat accurate picture of FS3's writing program and added that the program is generally weak. The principal also said that the faculty have a "'higher perspective'" than the students in terms of understanding the goals of the writing program. In response to question 2, *if the outcome of the study was worth the effort,* the principal did not yet know, hoping that it would prove productive. In response to question 3, *how the study had benefited or would benefit the school,* the principal said by allowing the school to strengthen its writing program and expressed hope that teachers would use the information to align writing instruction. In response to question 4, *what were suggestions for improving the School Study process,* the principal suggested that interview questions be aligned to the report form better because they did not seem to match.

Four of the 5 Steering Committee members returned a feedback form. In response to question 1, *what was the respondent's personal time spent to conduct the study,* 1 respondent said 20+ hours, 1 said 15 hours, 1 said 10 hours, and 1 said 7 hours. In response to question 2, *which tasks in the School Study required the most time,* 2 respondents said the interviews and 1 said the interviews and report. One response was irrelevant to the question. The respondents reported that these activities took 6-10 hours.

In response to question 3, *how many Steering Committee meetings were held,* respondents said that 1 planning meeting of the entire Steering Committee was held, in which duties were assigned, interviewers and interviewees were selected, and dates set. (However, it is known from phone interviews and facilitator data that 2 subsequent planning meetings were convened as well in which only the two co-chairs participated.)

In response to question 4, *whether they could have carried out the study without outside help,* 3 said yes and 1 said no. To the second part of question 4, *what tasks would have been difficult without outside help,* 2 respondents said getting started and 1 said asking, compiling, and interpreting interview data.

In answer to question 5, *whether the school profile was an accurate picture of their writing program's strengths and weaknesses,* 2 said yes and 2 said no. To the second part of question 5, *what inaccuracies were there and what about the study process may have caused them,* 1 respondent felt that the interview data had caused the report to be inaccurate, which generated many differing opinions in group discussion at the rating meeting.

In answer to question 6, *if the outcome of the study was worth the effort*, 3 said yes and alluded to its potential to improve the writing program. One said no, "because most of the work was done by myself and one other person" (this respondent being one of the two co-chairs).

In answer to question 7, *how the study had affected or would affect the school*, 2 respondents said the information would be incorporated into the writing program by the Consolidated Planning Committee; 1 said it had made teachers aware of the importance of different types of writing and how different types could be geared to all ages; and 1 said it had increased the entire school's awareness of the importance of the writing program and would align the school toward improving.

In answer to question 8, *which parts of the study process were most helpful*, 2 said student interviews (e.g., "gave me insight into what students are thinking"), 1 said both teacher and student interviews, and 1 said the revelation of the need for professional development and follow-up "to get all teachers on the same track." Also, 1 of the respondents mentioned being unaware that some faculty did not know about the teacher's writing handbook (*Writing Portfolio Development Teacher's Handbook*, KDE, 1994a).

In answer to question 9, *which parts of the process were least helpful*, 2 respondents left it blank; 1 said the selected number of teacher interviewees, asserting that most or more teachers should have been interviewed to gain a clearer picture; and 1 said that engaging in a review of what was already known was least helpful.

Question 10 solicited *suggestions for improvements to the study process*. Two suggested beginning earlier in the year than April, 1 respondent adding that the study should have been spread over a longer time span. One respondent did not have any suggestions. One response was idiosyncratic.

Question 11 asked about *the utility of the sample report as an aid to report writing*. Three respondents said it was helpful and recommended including it in the handbook. One response was ambiguous.

Reliability of FS3's report. FS3 did not submit student interviews, so the reliability examination could take into account only the interviews from teachers and administrators. Furthermore, since 2 of the 5 topics chosen for review called for the student perspective only, only 3 of the 5 topics could be examined reliably. Seven teacher interviews were submitted, but 3 were at least partially written in shorthand (and thus illegible to the reviewer), so only 4-5 could be read depending on the question. None of the teacher interviews were compiled.

The examination of the 3 available report topic responses showed that all 3 were *entirely or approximately equivalent* to the reviewer's sample in accuracy and breadth of data items considered. They captured most relevant major and minor points. Two used descriptive detail adequately for summarizing and characterizing aspects of the writing program, while 1 had a slight deficit in detail. One response reflected a misrepresentation of interview data in the direction of higher self-appraisal. Although there were no student interview data available to the reviewer for any of the 5 report topics, the reviewer did read the responses in the student space of the school's report (for context, see Appendix E). Three of the 5 seemed to reflect sufficient breadth in the number of data items considered and use of detail, and 2 did not as they were brief, although these impressions cannot be verified. The "Other" space was not used in the 5 responses under scrutiny here and was used rarely in the remainder of the report. Overall, FS3's report responses were mostly sufficient and descriptive enough for depicting the writing program, yet they were sometimes abbreviated. At the rating meeting, the faculty expressed the belief that the report was not reflective of the writing program.

Facilitated School #4

Description of FS4's study process. FS4 conducted its school study in 5 weeks between April 19 and May 25, 1999. Ten weeks elapsed between the facilitator's first phone contact with the school on February 8 and the Steering Committee's start on April 19. The first meeting, originally scheduled for March 8, was postponed on late notice at the request of the principal and, due to intervening schedule conflicts, could not be rescheduled until April 12. The meeting was again postponed on late notice until April 19 due to state testing.

The facilitator described the principal as very enthusiastic and motivated to do the school study. He had read the entire handbook prior to the first Steering Committee meeting. His interest in conducting the study emanated from the feeling that the school had experienced a plateau in its writing scores. However, the study seemed to commence in a disorganized fashion. For instance, at the first meeting, most Steering Committee members arrived without knowing why they were there. Although a time line of start-up tasks had been drawn up in one of the facilitator's phone calls with the principal, the involvement of participating individuals was not always requested in a timely fashion. The facilitator also reported that the Committee was likewise fairly disorganized; none of the three planning meetings had perfect attendance. The study process seemed rushed and disorganized in general.

There were either 9 or 10 individuals on the Steering Committee (the data sources were conflicting), including the principal and at least 1 parent from the School-Based Decision Making (SBDM) Council. Almost all faculty on the Committee were language arts teachers. Two members were on the Committee because they expressly requested to participate. The first meeting began late, after some participants were located (who had not yet been notified of their nomination to the Committee) and some copies of the handbook were made. According to the facilitator, most members were not anxious to volunteer for tasks, since that time of year was busy.

At this first meeting, the facilitator first reviewed the handbook. Then the Committee planned step 1. They selected four parents to conduct the teacher and student interviews, and they asked the facilitator to train the parents as well as interview the principal and district administrator. The principal called the parents and the chair selected the interviewees. A form was sent to parents to gain permission to interview students.

According to the Steering Committee chair, interviews took place over a 1-week period. Five teachers and 11 students were interviewed. The Committee aimed for teachers' planning periods and minimal disruptions to students. Several student interviews were conducted individually, while some were done in groups of 2-3 students. The chair reported that students enjoyed the process; she also reported that students experienced a problem understanding the jargon of the questions. For example, students would discuss examples of *real-world writing* in their interviews, but when specifically asked if they had done real-world writing, would say no. The facilitator reported that the district administrator adamantly refused to be interviewed. He requested that she send him the interview form and he completed the interview in writing; after reviewing it, the facilitator estimated that he spent little time on it. She attempted to follow up by phone to gather more information but was unsuccessful. The principal also completed his interview in writing due to an extenuating situation that arose at the school. Most interviews were not typed, only a few student interviews by their particular interviewer.

To write the report, Steering Committee members began working as a group at a meeting attended by the facilitator and may have spent extra time individually on their assigned sections, each spending a minimum of 3 hours. A parent volunteer or an aide (the data sources were conflicting) assembled the various sections and typed the complete report.

The facilitator had intended to join the Steering Committee at its third meeting for the purpose of planning the faculty rating session. She could not due to a conflict, but faxed them detailed guidelines for planning, a list of materials needed, and a rating meeting agenda. At this meeting, the Steering Committee preassigned small groups for the upcoming rating meeting and decided to ask the facilitator to lead the rating session, to which she agreed.

The Steering Committee chair reported that the faculty rating meeting was slightly longer than 2 hours and positive, which she attributed to the pre-planning by the committee and preparatory reading of the report by faculty. She said that the Committee had projected that they would barely finish rating and have no time for discussion. They were pleased that, to the contrary, the meeting progressed beyond rating to include completion of the school profile, discussion, and 1½ pages of reflections on preliminary priorities. She stated that reaching consensus was not an issue. The facilitator also described the rating meeting. She said that it "went smoothly, although there was obvious reluctance to voice anything . . .negative." Despite this tendency, the faculty advanced to useful discussion: group leaders (Steering Committee members) supported the process and "pushed for honesty," according to the facilitator. She added that some faculty expressed concern that "parents [may not be] the most effective interviewers" and also that "they wanted the report to be more reflective of what they saw as truth."

At the end of the rating meeting, step 4 of the study—priorities and planning—was assigned to the Steering Committee and the SBDM Council. The Steering Committee held a fourth meeting for this purpose. The facilitator did not attend.

Principal and Steering Committee feedback forms from FS4. The principal completed a feedback form. In response to question 1, *whether the writing program profile was an accurate picture of FS4's program's strengths and weaknesses*, the principal said yes, for the most part. In response to the second part of question 1, *what may have caused inaccuracies if any*, he said that the vagueness of the instrument caused rating inaccuracies on some topics. In response to question 2, *if the outcome of* *the study was worth the effort*, he stated that while Committee members may not have realized its worth, the faculty's eyes were opened as discussions took place and plans were made. In response to question 3, *how the study had benefited or would benefit the school*, he expected that it would create an increased awareness across faculty about the importance of writing instruction. Also, he stated that plans were underway to work on teacher training. In response to question 4, *what were suggestions for improving the study process*, he recommended making the paperwork consistent. He suggested that interview questions should be matched to report topics for compiling the interview data into the report. Also, he said that because the rating form did not contain spaces for rating some of the report topics, they were forced to record insufficient information for some topics.

Seven Steering Committee members (out of either 9 or 10 on the Committee) returned a feedback form, including the principal who had also responded to the principal form. His responses to questions 5-7 and question 10 (although duplicative or approximate to questions 1-4 on the principal form) are recorded with the others below. Also, the third page of the form was missing from all forms, inadvertently omitted during copying, so questions 10 and 11 were unanswered by these respondents.

In response to question 1, *what was the respondent's personal time spent to conduct the study*, respondents said 18 hours, 15 hours, a minimum of 12, 10 ½, 6, 3, and 2 hours. In response to question 2, *which tasks in the School Study required the most time*, respondents gave multiple answers. Five of the 7 respondents said compiling the interview data into the report, 2 of them estimating a minimum of 3 hours spent. Four of the 7 listed meetings. These were the two frequent responses. Isolated mentions from different individuals were copying, discussing the report, organizing, and acting as school liaison.

In response to question 3, *how many Steering Committee meetings were held*, the Committee held 4 planning meetings, including one for report planning and report writing and one following the rating session for beginning step 4. However, all members were not present at each meeting, individuals' attendance ranging between zero to four meetings.

In response to question 4, *whether they could have carried out the study without outside help*, 2 said yes (1 conceding, however, that the study may have been too great a task otherwise). Two said no. Two answered ambiguously and 1 left it blank. To the second part of question 4, *what tasks would have been difficult without outside help*, respondents listed providing motivation to do the study, understanding the process in general, interviewing administrators, and leading the Committee and faculty meetings. One respondent referred to the help of a volunteer who typed the report and to the help provided for conducting all of the interviews.

In answer to question 5, *whether the school profile was an accurate picture of their writing program's strengths and weaknesses*, 3 said yes, 2 said mostly, 1 said no, and 1 answered ambiguously. To the second part of question 5, *what inaccuracies were there and what about the study process may have caused them*, all 7 respondents gave either one or two responses related to interviews and report compilation. Four felt that interviews were not representative—student interviews were not valid, the student sample was not large enough, or interviewers did not understand the writing program enough to gather accurate information. Five said that interview questions were either too vague or did not correlate well to some report topics, making assimilation into the report insufficient or difficult.

In answer to question 6, *if the outcome of the study was worth the effort*, 5 said yes; 1 did not know (i.e.,"time will tell"); and 1 did not answer directly, stating that it was difficult for those on the Committee who were already burdened with writing instruction duties and suggesting that the inclusion of more content area teachers outside language arts on the Committee would have helped.

In answer to question 7, *how the study had affected or would affect the school*, 2 referred generally to improvement in the writing program. Three of the 7 referred to specific improvements, described as follows. One respondent described a chain of events in which new direction would translate into the development of a writing program instructional policy by the SBDM Council, which would in turn "eventually [permeate] change into the writing program." Another respondent also described a series of events in which school-wide teacher awareness would "[cause] writing instruction [to] be a *goal* of every content teacher . . .[and] foster more types of writing school-wide." A fifth respondent said benefits to professional development and SBDM Council decisions would result. Finally, 1 respondent predicted little effect based on past experience and 1 respondent answered ambiguously.

In answer to question 8, *which parts of the study process were most helpful*, 4 of the 7 respondents gave multiple answers. Five of 7 listed one or more aspects of the rating meeting—faculty discussion, the school profile and the process of developing it, and/or goal-setting. Two mentioned discussion and work done specifically within the Steering Committee. Two said the report, 1 said the interviews/surveys, and 1 said the student interviews specifically.

In answer to question 9, *which parts of the process were least helpful*, 4 pointed to the design of the handbook or to peoples' use of it. Specifically, one respondent mentioned vague interview questions and lack of their alignment to report topics for report compilation. One mentioned the school profile due to mistakes in the instrument. A third respondent said the ambiguity and inconsistency of interview responses, which caused doubt about the validity of the questions. A fourth said the room for interpretation due to the interview/report responses not being representative. Three of the 7 respondents said no parts were least helpful or had no opinion.

As explained earlier, questions 10 and 11 were missing from all of the feedback forms due to an inadvertent omission of that page during copying.

Reliability of FS4's report. FS4 submitted 5 teacher interviews and 11 student interviews, as well as 2 administrator interviews. Teacher interviews were not compiled. Nor were individual student interviews compiled. However, responses of 5 students who were interviewed in two separate groups were recorded on two forms. Thus, two forms containing responses of 5 students, plus 6 individual student interviews, were submitted.

Four of the 5 report responses were *entirely or approximately equivalent* to the reviewer's sample in accuracy and breadth of data items considered. One response contained a slight omission and

1 response a slight misrepresentation of the interview data. While the fifth report topic response contained a substantial misrepresentation of the interview data, it was nevertheless deemed *approximately equivalent* to the reviewer's sample based on the breadth and quality articulation of the other data considered. The "Other" space was not used at all throughout the report, probably because it was unnecessary given the exceptional amount of commentary that was already included in the designated role group spaces. In sum, all 5 topics were comprehensive and showed a deft use of detail, incorporated skillfully for summarizing and characterizing aspects of the writing program. In contrast, at the rating meeting, several faculty expressed that the report was not as reflective of the writing program as it could have been because some of the interviews were not.

The facilitator offered some insights into the level of representativeness achieved in the interviews. For several years, the school has received little district support, which has transferred much additional work to the school faculty. Her interpretation of the interview responses was that both interviewees and interviewers skirted around this controversial issue rather than overtly state it. For instance, to record administrator statements, they sometimes used quotation marks to punctuate them as if to cast doubt on their validity. The facilitator empathized with their caution as she found herself being careful as well; she raised the point that it is probably unnecessary to put controversial statements in writing when the rest of the faculty already understand the situation dynamics.

Facilitated School #5

Description of FS5's study process. FS5 conducted its school study in 7 weeks during a 9-week period between March 29 and June 1, 1999 (the study was suspended for a week each of spring break and state testing). Four weeks of phone calls between the facilitator and the school predated a February 22 meeting between the facilitator and assistant principal only. Another 4½ weeks transpired before the first full Steering Committee meeting on March 29.

The facilitator reported that the Committee's approach to and progress in the study was wonderful. The assistant principal acted as the Steering Committee chair. The facilitator described her as a very energetic and strong leader. The chair needed a small amount of help to start, i.e., "tell me the quickest and easiest way of doing this." She had adroitly prepared the Steering Committee so that they were ready to begin when the facilitator first met with them. The Committee chair phoned and e-mailed the facilitator fairly often and requested her presence at meetings. The principal of FS5 also involved himself in the study.

The Steering Committee was composed of 4 members, including the assistant principal as its chair. At its first meeting, attended by the facilitator, the chair presented the *School Study* handbook to the rest of the Committee. She presented the study process as a compliment to the school for having been asked to participate, as an opportunity to evaluate the writing program, and as a professional development activity that would enhance the faculty's growth. The Committee reviewed the four steps of the study in-depth and began planning the interviewing step. The chair reported that it was helpful having a few copies of the handbook at the meeting. She found the handbook to be helpful and orderly in its organization. The facilitator was also present at a second meeting, at which the Committee finalized the selection of interviewees, the assignment of report sections, and the schedule for the remainder of the study. Following the second meeting, the facilitator assessed the school's motivation positively, "All the teachers feel that this is going to benefit them greatly. I have enjoyed all my time with them. These folks are hard workers."

The Steering Committee chair reported that it was easy to select the interviewers—two substitute instructional assistants who interviewed as a pair. She stated that they dreaded the task initially but were engaged by it once they began. They interviewed 7 teachers and 10 students. They chose to interview students individually instead of in groups because they believed that students would give better responses individually. It appeared that the interviews of the older students were in their handwriting, indicating that these students either responded via written survey or were permitted to write their responses in the course of being verbally interviewed; it is unknown which is the case. Interviewers were able to stay within a class period for student interviews. Teacher interviews took a long time at first, but became easier for the interviewers with practice; some of these also seem to have been administered via written survey. The principal was interviewed by one of the two interviewers; it is unclear whether one also interviewed the district administrator or that individual completed the interview in writing. All interviews were accomplished in 2 days and were not typed.

The Committee worked collaboratively to write the report, spending 4 hours per day for 3 days. The chair mused that writing the report together afforded the opportunity for discussing what positive and negative data to accentuate. The report was typed by an individual designated as the word processor, not a member of the Steering Committee.

Until she was asked about the rating meeting in a phone interview, the Steering Committee chair had forgotten about the subsequent steps in the study—the rating meeting and setting priorities—thinking that they had finished the process with the report-writing activity. Once reminded, she scheduled the rating meeting and described it in a later phone interview. She commented that the rating meeting was "the biggest ordeal of the whole process." So that all faculty would be familiar with all report topics, the Committee decided to conduct the rating session as a whole group rather than divide the faculty into small groups. The meeting lasted 2 hours, which the chair felt was too long. Since faculty were unfamiliar with the report categories, they had to spend time discussing them. The faculty reached consensus on everything, according to the chair. They ranked low on some issues out of their control such as community support and district office support, so they were unsure how to address them. However, they identified instructional issues that they felt they could address and improve. The group also expressed the need for a clearer student perspective, thinking that for the size of the student body, 10 interviewees were perhaps too few.

To set priorities, the Committee planned another faculty-wide meeting for the last day of school, saying that they wanted "to share everything with everyone." The chair called the research team mid-summer to inquire about the stipend as they had not yet received it. In the course of this conversation, she reported that they had cancelled the priorities meeting, thinking that it would be more beneficial to hold it at the beginning of the new school year when faculty would be fresh. However, the school profile had been presented at a regular faculty meeting before the close of the year. Faculty were asked to be thinking about the results for the next school year. The faculty would return in early August to attend 2 days of professional development on curriculum issues to be given by consultants. The

Committee's hope was to include writing instruction in these discussions; their intention was that responsibility for writing instruction not be "dumped" on the writing teacher but holistically incorporated into all instruction. Earlier in May, the facilitator had shared her view that FS5 would progress far with the *School Study*; they were asking questions such as, "What can we say the last day of school?" and "What will this lead to next year?"

Principal and Steering Committee feedback forms from FS5. The principal completed a feedback form. In response to question 1, *whether the writing program profile was an accurate picture of FS5's program's strengths and weaknesses*, he responded affirmatively. In response to question 2, *if the outcome of the study was worth the effort*, he said yes but suggested that for the time spent, all faculty be interviewed in future studies. In response to question 3, *how the study would or had benefited the school*, he stated that any feedback is helpful for designing and improving instruction that increases student achievement. In response to question 4, *what were suggestions for improving the School Study*, his suggestion was unintelligible.

Four individuals returned a feedback form, 2 of whom did not appear to be original members of the Committee—the interviewer and the person who did the word processing; yet, the latter indicated that she did perform some Steering Committee tasks in addition to word processing.

In response to question 1, *what was the respondent's personal time spent to conduct this study*, 1 respondent said 22-24 hours, 1 said 21 hours, 1 said 10-12, and 1 said 6. In response to question 2, *which tasks in the School Study required the most time*, 1 said interviews preparation (4-6 hours); 1 said copying interview forms and assembling packages for the interviews (2-3 hours) and analyzing interviews (2 hours); and 1 said reading each individual reply in the interviews.

In response to question 3, *how many Steering Committee meetings were held*, the Steering Committee held either 3 or 4 meetings prior to the faculty rating session. (The responses are conflicting; it is possible that not everyone attended all meetings.)

In response to question 4, *whether they could have carried out the study without outside help*, 3 either indicated or answered yes, 2 of them saying, "most of the support was contained within the Committee." One did not respond. To the second part of question 4, *what tasks would have been difficult without outside help*, 2 suggested either that an additional interviewer or only non-staff interviewer(s) be employed, given the size and time constraints of faculty, and 1 said that the most difficult task was finding the time to gather needed information. One of these 3 added that answering a survey in the role of interviewee also took a substantial amount of time.

In answer to question 5, *whether the school profile was an accurate picture of their program's strengths and weaknesses*, 3 said yes and 1 did not answer directly. To the second part of question 5, *what inaccuracies were there and what about the study process may have caused them*, the latter respondent mentioned above identified the student interviews as a source of inaccuracies, as student interviewees may have forgotten writing concepts previously taught to them. The other 3 did not list anything.

In answer to question 6, *if the outcome of the study was worth the effort*, 3 said or indicated yes, i.e., "any feedback . . .is welcomed and beneficial." A fourth respondent said somewhat and added that the study should have been initiated and completed earlier in the school year (before May).

In answer to question 7, *how the study had affected or would affect the school*, 2 said by identifying areas needing improvement and then causing those improvements to be made. One said it had increased faculty's awareness of their knowledge level and participation in the writing program. One was not sure.

In answer to question 8, *which parts of the study process were most helpful*, 2 said the teacher interviews, either because teachers demonstrated honesty or because they provided the most information on writing instruction. One gave 3 responses: (a) the student and teacher interviews because they are an accurate portrayal of what is actually taking place in the classroom; (b) recording the interviews (in the report); and (c) the administrators' interviews, because principals help with professional development and realigning curriculum and schedules. A fourth pointed to his or her answer to question 5, which stated that only student interviews showed inaccuracies, due to students forgetting what had been taught to them; it is unclear whether the respondent meant that student interviews provided insights because of their inaccuracies or that all other parts of the study but the student interviews were helpful.

In answer to question 9, *which parts of the study were least helpful*, 1 said the randomness of student interview selection and the tedium and unclear directions for the rating process. One said the lack of supportive detail in student responses to interview questions. One said having to ask some of the students about benchmarks, because the multi-part questions frustrated them. One said none.

Question 10 solicited *suggestions for improvements to the study process*. One said to condense the number of interview questions. One said to gain input from a greater number of teachers to have a greater impact. One had five suggestions: (a) conduct the study earlier in the school year; (b) allow teachers time to preview interview questions to speed up the interview process; (c) allow teachers to be involved in selecting the students to be interviewed; (d) include all teachers as interviewees; and (e) condense the number of interview questions or allow teachers to write answers to most questions prior to their interviews. One had no suggestions.

Question 11 asked about *the utility of the sample report as an aid to report writing*. Three said it was useful and recommended continuing to include it in the handbook, and 1 had not used it.

Reliability of FS5's report. FS5 submitted 7 teacher interviews and 11 student interviews. Neither set was compiled. Also, FS5 submitted a principal, but not a district administrator, interview.

A few of the 5 report topic responses examined were rather brief in at least part of the response. Two of the 5 responses were *entirely or approximately equivalent* to the reviewer's sample in accuracy and breadth of data items considered. These 2 responses accounted for major and minor relevant points and effectively incorporated detail for summarizing and describing aspects of the writing program;

however, 1 of the responses did contain a slight misrepresentation of the interview data. Two other of the 5 responses were *partially equivalent* to the reviewer's sample in accuracy and scope; they omitted a few major points and lacked enough supporting detail for describing aspects of the writing program. Finally, 1 of the 5 responses was *barely equivalent* to the reviewer's sample in accuracy and scope, having omitted all major points, one minor point, and much detail; however, the minor point that was included in the response was elucidated well. The "Other" space was not utilized at all throughout the report; however, the review of the 5 responses under scrutiny here showed that additional information was incorporated directly into the responses of the designated role groups. In sum, FS5's report was concise and only partially comprehensive.

Condition 2: Independent Schools

Independent School #1

Description of IS1's study process. IS1 conducted the *School Study* in 6 weeks over an 8-week period between March 8 and May 5, 1999, suspending the study for a week each of spring break and testing. Beginning with a phone call on February 2 from the principal to the contact person, 5 weeks elapsed before the Steering Committee first met sometime during the week of March 8. The principal chose the second week of March to start the study so that it could be completed before testing began in May. The contact person said that the principal had called her once to inquire about the receipt of the stipend and to ask two questions about the study process: whether it was acceptable to use parents rather than teachers as interviewers and what was the recommended size of the Steering Committee. The remainder of the phone contacts were initiated by the contact person; she checked with the principal each month for an update on IS1's progress. Otherwise, the contact person reported that the principal's initial impression of the *School Study* handbook was that it was "'easy . . . [for accessing] information, well put-together, and divided nicely.'" Near the conclusion of the study, the principal thanked her, saying that the study was "'a great process, [providing] very useful information.'"

The principal provided a synopsis of the first Steering Committee meeting in separate phone conversations with the contact person and another member of the collaborative research team. There were 4 on the Steering Committee—3 teachers and the principal, who served as the chair. The principal presented the *School Study* handbook, having already made a copy for each Committee member. He overviewed the process, then discussed each of the four steps in more detail. The Committee then selected interviewers and student and teacher interviewees, and set the dates for the interviews. In addition, having read the teacher interview questions, the Steering Committee began brainstorming about ways to gain whole faculty buy-in so that corrective changes could be made to the writing program. A parent who was also an educator was chosen as the interviewer; the Committee chose her because staff knew her and they believed staff would be comfortable with her.

For the interviews, the interviewer brought a partner to help scribe for her. They returned to the school several times over a period of approximately 10 days to complete interviews, twice for teacher interviews and thrice for student interviews, which added up to 2-3 days total. They interviewed 6 teachers and an unknown number of students. (It is unknown how many students were interviewed at this school because the school did not submit copies of its interviews to the research team and the principal did not say during a phone interview.) For the most part, teacher and student interviews could each be conducted within the space of a class period, although some tended to run over the allotted time. Initially, the interviewers talked to students on an individual basis, but switched to interviewing them in groups of 2-3 because of time constraints. According to feedback they gave the principal, the interviewers preferred the group method. The interviewer typed onto the computer while the scribe wrote in longhand during the interviews, thus no typing was done afterwards. The scribe's notes were to serve as a cross-check of the interviewer's notes.

The principal was unaware of the amount of time spent by each Steering Committee member in developing sections of the report or the total time spent writing and typing it, but said that each Steering Committee member reported that the task required a lot of time.

The principal reported that the faculty-wide rating meeting included the rating activity, school profile, and action-plan activities. It lasted 3 hours, but the rating itself took just 45-60 minutes. They did the rating activity in small groups to which they were preassigned by the principal. Regarding step 4, the principal reported that they did not finish the action plan but said that they have a good handle on a focus for next year. He told the contact person that they were planning to focus on professional development in writing for all faculty since learning that, currently, writing was being targeted only in accountable grades.

Principal and Steering Committee feedback forms from IS1. The principal provided brief responses on the feedback form. In response to question 1, *whether the writing program profile was an accurate picture of IS1's program's strengths and weaknesses*, he responded affirmatively. In response to question 2, *if the outcome of the study was worth the effort*, he said yes. In response to question 3, *how the study had benefited or would benefit the school*, he answered that they had targeted areas for professional development for *all* staff members. In response to question 4, *what were suggestions for improving the School Study*, he had none.

Three of the 4 Steering Committee members returned a feedback form. (Presumably, the principal did not complete one because he had responded on the designated principal form.) In response to question 1, *what was the respondent's personal time spent to conduct the study*, 1 spent 7½ hours, 1 spent 8-9 hours, and 1 spent 12 hours. In response to question 2, *which tasks in the School Study required the most time*, 1 said reading the manual (3 hours) and preparing the report (2 hrs); 1 said reading, studying, and doing the report; and the third said reading the interview responses and trying to correlate the questions and responses to report topics. So, all 3 respondents mentioned the task of creating the report.

In response to question 3, *how many Steering Committee meetings were held*, the Committee held 4 planning meetings prior to the faculty-wide rating meeting.

In response to question 4, *at what points in the study did they need to contact someone with questions*, 1 said she had a few questions but did not specify; 1 said she discussed the *Writing Portfolio Development Teacher's Handbook* (KDE, 1994a) with another teacher; 1 said she found everything to be fairly straightforward. To the second part of question 4, *for which tasks did they need more assistance than was available*, none responded.

In answer to question 5, *whether the school profile was an accurate picture of their writing program's strengths and weaknesses*, 1 said "basically a true picture." One answered yes, and added that she expected additional strengths and weaknesses to surface later.

In answer to question 6, *if the outcome of the study was worth the effort*, 1 said "Yes! Yes!"; 1 said yes, mainly by making nonaccountable grade teachers aware of the difficulty in improving writing without their participation; and 1 said no, because the amount of time spent interviewing teachers confirmed what was already known and the sample of student interviews was not thorough enough.

In answer to question 7, *how the study had affected or would affect the school*, 1 said by creating awareness by all teachers of writing impact for all students; 1 said by creating awareness of areas needing development and by stimulating new work on expanding the curriculum to overcome those weaknesses; and 1 said by highlighting the need for professional development in writing instruction for all teachers. But the third respondent doubted the teachers' willingness to "take ownership of the 'next steps' in the action plan," saying that the teachers thought of the rating session as just "another thing to do."

In answer to question 8, *which parts of the study process were most helpful*, 1 said the student and teacher interviews; 1 said seeing "how the students perceive their writing and the actuality of it"; and 1 said the rating guide. The third respondent added, however, that only the Steering Committee saw the rating guide; she wished that the entire faculty had seen it "to provide a vision of what's possible . . .our faculty meeting did not provide a vision—just numbers."

In answer to question 9, *which parts of the study process were least helpful*, 2 said all parts were helpful, but 1 added that some report topics could not be answered from the interview data. One left it blank.

Question 10 solicited *suggestions for improvements to the study process*. Two respondents were unclear. One respondent had two suggestions. First, the respondent suggested aligning the report topics to specific questions in the interviews because teachers are busy and could use that help. Second, the respondent presented a recommendation for greatly expanding the scope of the rating session. This individual stated that "a faculty meeting . . .'centered on' goals and steps for improvement needs more than numbers and printed pages." Instead, the rating meeting should have been a *workshop* in which teachers wrote down specific actions to be taken and left with "specific steps in mind," rather than just "a brainstorm list on a chart." In addition, the respondent stated that such a workshop should model writing: "I figure that if we want kids to write, then we teachers need to write and it needs to be modeled in the discussion and decision-making process."

Question 11 asked about *the utility of the sample report as an aid to report writing*. One used it but said it was not necessary. One said yes, she had used it. One did not see it.

Reliability of IS1's report. IS1 provided a copy of its report but was not comfortable providing the interviews. Therefore, the report could not be truly examined for reliability. However, a review of the report revealed it to be abbreviated with very little detail, capturing some points but not others and presenting only one-sentence statements under a few role group spaces. Also, the contact person shared her assessment of the representativeness of the report. Based on anecdotal feedback that she had received from the interviewers about the interviews, she believed that the writers were diplomatic in the report and that they did not incorporate all data. She felt that perhaps they were unwilling to say that they were dissatisfied with their progress in the writing program.

Independent School #2

Description of IS2's study process. IS2 conducted the *School Study* in 6 weeks between March 11 and April 21, 1999. The contact person first called the school principal sometime in late January to introduce herself and offer assistance as necessary. She stated that he was excited about the study and what the school could learn from it. She called periodically throughout the study to inquire if he or the Steering Committee had any questions. In a late March call when the interviews were almost completed, the principal stated that they had no questions or need of assistance; the interviews were going well. He continued to be delighted with the process, although the timing was poor because the school had experienced problems that year and state testing was taking place. During a later call from the contact person, about a month after the rating meeting, he had a few questions about the action plan. Throughout the study, the contact person initiated all contacts except for one call and one e-mail communication, both from the Steering Committee chair.

The district writing cluster leader served as the Steering Committee chair. In a phone interview, she also said that the timing of the study was poor due to contemporaneous portfolio scoring. Also, teachers at the feeder school declined to help with the study, putting the burden on the teachers at IS2. According to the chair, there were 5 or 6 on the Steering Committee (data sources were conflicting), including herself and various faculty members. Except for one teacher, nonaccountable grade teachers served on the committee to free accountable grade teachers for portfolio scoring.

The Steering Committee chair organized most of the study for the other members due to their limited time. The committee had only 1 main planning meeting to start the study, at which the chair presented the *School Study* and set dates, and another short one to preassign teachers for the rating session.

The chair was chosen to be the interviewer since she had no classes. She also selected all of the interviewees. IS2 included two grades from its feeder school in the study, interviewing both teachers and students. She surveyed 7 teachers and interviewed 11 students. To save time, teachers were asked to respond via written survey rather than verbal interview to save time. The chair interviewed students in groups of 4 because she believed that they would be most comfortable in that group size; she reported that, as expected, this group size worked well because students were openly expressive. In one particular group in which the interviewer knew none of the students, she was "convinced" that they would not have been forthcoming in responding had the interview been conducted on an individual basis instead. Student interviews lasted approximately 45 minutes; the interviewer spent 2 days total on the task, 1 day at each of the schools. She scribed student interviews herself by taking notes and spent 1 hour typing and compiling them onto one student form.

To complete the report, the Steering Committee chair said that most Steering Committee members spent approximately 1½ hours on their assigned sections. The chair's secretary typed the report over the week of spring break.

At the faculty-wide rating meeting, language arts teachers (some from the Steering Committee and some not) led the small groups. Each group completed its portion of the ratings, but groups did not share their findings at this point. The Steering Committee had decided to assign the first part of step 4, setting priorities, to the whole faculty. Thus another faculty-wide meeting was convened for this purpose. The committee divided groups further for this meeting. Ratings were shared on the school profile at this time. Each of these two faculty meetings lasted about 45-60 minutes.

The second part of step 4, planning actions, was assigned to a planning committee composed of the Steering Committee participants and a few additional individuals. The planning committee intended to complete planning during the summer before the new principal was scheduled to arrive and gather suggestions from the feeder school the following school year.

Following IS2's completion of the school study, the Steering Committee shared some insights about their progress and findings. The study confirmed what they knew—that there had previously been no buy-in to the writing program from non-language arts teachers. The school had experienced a bad year because some non-language arts, content teachers did not view writing instruction as their job. Several did not want to be involved in the school study. IS2 was hoping for a better school year in 1999-2000. The chair was pleased with the process and glad to be a part of it. She had particularly found the experience of interviewing students to be interesting and valuable. By May, IS2 was considering next steps and had already incorporated some information from the student interviews into the Consolidated Plan.

Principal and Steering Committee feedback forms from IS2. The principal provided extensive comments on the feedback form. In response to question 1, *whether the writing program profile was an accurate picture of IS2's program's strengths and weaknesses*, he believed that the school profile very accurately depicted IS2's writing program, from which an improvement plan could be developed. In response to question 2, *if the outcome of the study was worth the effort*, he felt that the study was "well worth the effort," although the timing was not the best, and recommended that every school participate in the study.

In response to question 3, *how the study had benefited or would benefit the school*, he had several insights. He stated that the study permitted the school to move beyond perceptions, demonstrating areas in which they could improve student writing in nonaccountable as well as accountable grades. The results enabled the administrators and language arts teachers to develop a plan that would involve all teachers, because most non-language arts teachers still lacked a comprehensive knowledge of the requisite skills to complement language arts teachers' instruction. Specifically, they were planning changes to the Title I program in order to provide more training and professional development. The SBDM council approved hiring a writing specialist to assist in the development of the school's writing plan, to train teachers, and to work closely with accountable grade teams on developing students' writing portfolios.

In response to question 4, *what were suggestions for improving the School Study*, the principal alluded again to its timing. He was not sure that there is a best time to conduct the study. It was a "stretch" for the school to complete it in the spring; he added, however, that it was probably the "teachable moment" since that was the time when portfolios were on the mind of accountable grade teachers who were in the midst of scoring them.

Three of the 5 or 6 Steering Committee members, including the chair, returned a feedback form. In response to question 1, *what was the respondent's personal time spent to conduct the study*, 1 said 10 hours, 1 said 3½ to 4 hours, and the chair said 5 hours (although the chair's estimate seems low given the tasks that she performed and the time that she reported on the phone having spent on those tasks). In response to question 2, *which tasks in the School Study required the most time*, 1 said organizing interviews at both schools (1 hour) and filling out the report based on all sources of information (3 hours); 1 likewise said gathering and consolidating the interview data (2¾ hours); and the third also said reviewing the questionnaires and summarizing the information. Thus each identified the process of translating interview data into the report as the task requiring the most time.

In response to question 3, *how many Steering Committee meetings were held*, the Steering Committee held 2 planning meetings prior to the faculty meetings. However, 1 of the 3 respondents had attended none.

In response to question 4, *at what point did they need to contact someone with questions and for which tasks did they need more assistance than was available*, 2 said none, 1 adding that all was explained and all her/his questions answered at the initial meeting. The chair said that only the final report was an issue (it is unclear whether she actually meant the report or the action plan, at which point it is known that the principal did call with questions).

In answer to question 5, *whether the school profile was an accurate picture of their writing program's strengths and weaknesses*, 2 respondents said yes and 1 left it blank. One added that in fact, the study produced similar results to another study of IS2's writing program conducted earlier, which also showed the existence of definite needs of the program.

In answer to question 6, *if the outcome of the study was worth the effort*, all 3 respondents said yes, 1 adding, ". . .although the time line was ridiculous—too much work in too . . . [small] a time frame."

In answer to question 7, *how the study had affected or would affect the school*, 1 said it raised awareness of how each role group views the school's writing process. One listed two effects: (a) the creation of a committee to study various options for addressing weaknesses and (b) the hiring of a writing teacher solely for working with teachers and addressing concerns expressed by faculty and students. One believed, admittedly sadly, that the school would not be affected because the "uncovered" information was already known and apathy was their biggest obstacle.

In answer to question 8, *which parts of the study process were most helpful*, all 3 said the interviews, 1 stating that the interviews illustrated different perspectives but common concerns.

In answer to question 9, *which parts of the process were least helpful*, 2 said the time frame and 1 said none because all parts were necessary to achieve the final results.

Question 10 solicited *suggestions for improvements to the study process.* Two suggested aligning the interviews with the report. One gave none.

Question 11 asked about *the utility of the sample report as an aid to report writing.* All 3 found it helpful. The chair also noted that Steering Committee members had indicated to her that the sample was helpful.

Reliability of IS2's report. IS2 had intended to send its report along with the interviews but neglected to include it; therefore, a reliability examination could not be performed. The contact person could offer no insight because she did not see the school's report.

Independent School #3

Description of IS3's study process. IS3 did not complete the study of its writing program. The contact person began calling the school in January to find out if they had decided to conduct the study. In a February call, she was told that responsibility for it had been given to the assistant principal. The assistant principal communicated at that time that she understood the process and had no problems. When the contact person called again, a member of the SBDM council told her that IS3 was preparing to hold a faculty meeting to glean faculty's wishes about conducting the study. When she called again, she was told that the decision had been made to proceed and dates were set for steps in the study. She then made another call to confirm the school's date for the faculty rating meeting, which she was told would be April 5, 1999. The contact person initiated all phone calls and contacts with the school.

In mid-May, the contact person spoke to the assistant principal, who informed her that the interviews had not yet been done. The contact person offered to help the Committee with the interviews. Later, she was told that teacher interviews were completed and student interviews would be conducted by the assistant principal during the last 2 days of school. Also, the assistant principal indicated that the Steering Committee would write the report the day after the close of school. They would hold the rating meeting during summer school around mid-June with only a few faculty present. The contact person offered to help with the meeting and suggested that the school pay faculty to participate.

The assistant principal explained the various reasons for IS3's delay in doing the study. The SBDM council had withdrawn support for the study midway through teacher interviews, saying that the study was taking too much time. The study was suspended until the principal overrode the decision. Also, a Steering Committee member had extenuating personal health concerns.

Subsequent contacts and offers of assistance by the contact person were not acknowledged by the school. Based on a research team member's conversation with the Steering Committee chair in early July, it was gathered that no steps beyond interviewing had been completed. The school had no data to contribute to the field test.

Principal and Steering Committee feedback forms from IS3. No participants from this school returned a feedback form.

Reliability of IS3's report. Although IS3 reported that it had completed the interviews step, this cannot be confirmed. No documents were received from IS3, so a reliability examination could not be performed.

Independent School #4

Description of IS4's study process. IS4 completed its school study in 6 weeks between early March and May, 1999. The study was suspended for 2 weeks while assessment and portfolio scoring were taking place. The contact person made several phone calls prior to and in the beginning of the study, always speaking to the principal. The principal assured her that they were handling the process ably and that the Steering Committee chair was very efficient. He called the contact person twice with minor questions. After identifying individuals' roles early in the study process, IS4 postponed the study until assessment was over. The contact person had not spoken to the principal since that time as a few of her calls had not been returned, but was confident in IS4's ability to conduct the study because of the principal's efficiency. The principal had, however, spoken to another member of the collaborative research team in the interim and given a tentative date for the school's rating meeting.

In a phone interview, the Steering Committee chair relayed that the responsibility came to her late because the writing leader teacher originally intended for the position ultimately could not fill it. The study began late because of this circumstance as well as the delay due to testing and portfolio scoring. There were originally at least 4 on the Steering Committee (the data were incomplete); however, the parent member could never be reached at an opportune moment. Thus the Committee eventually had 3 members, including the chair. Also, the two other teacher members were only sporadically available due to various personal reasons. Thus the chair did a substantial portion of the work herself.

The Steering Committee had 1 planning meeting; other exchanges between members were informal. At the meeting, the chair presented the *School Study* handbook to the Committee, gave each member a copy, and assigned report sections. She also did the principal interview, copied interviews for the Steering Committee, wrote a section of the report, typed the entire report, and copied it.

Seven teachers and 12 students were interviewed. The principal made the decision that most teachers should be interviewed. Two staff from a local Family Resource Center interviewed teachers over a 1-week period; three higher grade level students from another school interviewed 4 students each over a period of 4 days within the same week. Students were interviewed on an individual basis; the chair said that students were not sufficient interviewers because they did not probe student interviewees for more comprehensive, meaningful responses. Also, the chair reported that some student interviewees did not understand the questions. Interviews lasted about 45 minutes each. As planned, the chair interviewed the principal, but she administered the district administrator interview to the superintendent via written survey because she herself became ill on the scheduled date. No interviews were typed.

The report writing duties were divided among 3 Steering Committee members. The chair was unsure how long it took the others to do their sections; it took her 2-3 hours to complete her section and 1 hour to type it.

The faculty rating meeting was rescheduled several times. The faculty's presence was requested on a voluntary basis because the meeting was held so close to the end of the school year. Slightly more than 50% of the faculty attended. Although she desired higher attendance, the chair noted that the number attending was adequate for the task because the faculty is large. The chair reported that the meeting progressed well and did not last as long as was expected (it lasted 1½ -2 hours). After each faculty small group finished rating its assigned section, she read all results aloud. The faculty then engaged in discussion. They did not complete the school profile at this meeting; the Committee decided to defer it as well as setting priorities to the next school year since not much time remained in the current year.

Principal and Steering Committee feedback forms from IS4. The principal completed a feedback form. In response to question 1, *whether the writing program profile was an accurate picture of IS4's program's strengths and weaknesses*, he answered yes. In response to question 2, *if the outcome of the study was worth the effort*, he also answered affirmatively. In response to question 3, *how the study had benefited or would benefit the school*, he said that setting priorities was scheduled to be part of professional development activities for the 1999-2000 school year. Ultimately, he anticipated that implementing work regarding their priorities and following up on it would improve student writing. In response to question 4, *what were suggestions for improving the School Study process*, he suggested that all grade levels be included in the interview process for gaining an entire school focus.

Three members of the Steering Committee returned a feedback form. In response to question 1, *what was the respondent's personal time spent to conduct the study*, the chair reported 11 hours, 1 spent 7 hours, and 1 spent 6. In response to question 2, *which tasks in the School Study required the most time*, 1 said reading the interview responses several times (1 hour) and summarizing the interview responses for the report (3 hours); 1 answered verbatim, but without the time designations; and 1 said compiling survey [interview] responses (4 hours). Thus all 3 named the report.

In response to question 3, *how many Steering Committee meetings were held*, the Committee held 1 planning meeting, at which the chair explained the study's purpose, shared the completed interviews and other materials, and assigned report sections. One respondent also listed an informal meeting.

In response to question 4, *at what points in the study did they need to contact someone with questions*, 1 said while compiling the report, but the respondent did not indicate whom she or he had asked. To the second part of question 4, *for which tasks did they need more assistance than was available*, 2 said none and the third response was ambiguous in meaning and not able to be classified.

In answer to question 5, *whether the school profile was an accurate picture of their writing program's strengths and weaknesses*, all 3 respondents said yes. In answer to question 6, *if the outcome of the study was worth the effort*, 2 said yes and 1 was not sure yet.

In answer to question 7, *how the study had affected or would affect the school*, all 3 respondents referred to increased participation in writing instruction by nonaccountable teachers. One elaborated, "I think . . .[nonaccountable] teachers realized the discrepancies between what they did in regard to writing and what the . . . [accountable] grade had to do to produce writing portfolios for our state assessment." Another answered, "Some teachers will begin to use their writing handbook even if they're not . . . [an accountable] grade teacher."

In answer to question 8, *which parts of the study process were most helpful*, 2 said the interviews. One said faculty discussion, i.e., "Large group of entire staff discussing results was an eye-opener for some of the staff. Refocus."

In answer to question 9, *which parts of the study process were least helpful*, 1 said none; 1 offered none, saying all parts were helpful; and 1 said the lack/quality of input from parents or the community.

Question 10 solicited *suggestions for improvements to the study process.* Two suggested including a greater number and/or greater variety of interviews from all grades and content areas. One left it blank.

Question 11 asked about *the utility of the sample report as an aid to report writing.* All 3 respondents said it was helpful and recommended continuing to include it in the *School Study* handbook.

Reliability of IS4's report. IS4 submitted 7 teacher interviews and 12 student interviews, neither set of which was compiled, as well as the principal and district administrator interviews.

One report topic response was *entirely equivalent* to the reviewer's sample in accuracy and breadth of data items considered. One response was *partially equivalent*, even though it excluded three major points and the detail it included was not the most illustrative of the data being considered. Three of the 5 report responses were *barely or not at all equivalent* to the reviewer's sample in accuracy and scope. They excluded several major and minor points and were unusually brief, incorporating either no or irrelevant detail and abbreviating statements under a few of the role group spaces to one sentence. One of these 3 responses contained writing in the "Other" space, but in none of the role group spaces. In the rest of the report, the "Other" space was used in one other instance. Despite the presence of several omission errors as described, there were no misrepresentations of data in any of the 5 responses.

Overall, the report responses were very brief and contained insufficient detail for capturing and characterizing aspects of the writing program.

Independent School #5

Description of IS5's study process. IS5 completed its school study in 6 weeks between April 19 and June 3, 1999. Three months of calling between the contact person and the school, beginning on January 22, prefaced the start of the study.

The contact person said that the school needed substantial help in the beginning. She believed that the staff were merely unsure of the process, not realizing how easy it was. Early in February before the study began, the principal called the contact person to request that she facilitate the study rather than simply advise them as a contact person, to which she agreed. The Steering Committee chair had many questions and required assistance getting started and developing the calendar for completion. According to the contact/facilitator, the chair is a busy teacher who helps other faculty. Although busy, she was motivated to participate in the study because she wanted help with the school's writing program. The contact/facilitator's first meeting with the school on April 19 was with the principal, Steering Committee chair, and curriculum supervisor only, not with the entire Steering Committee.

The Steering Committee first met on May 3 to preview the study process.[19] They concentrated on the "Time and Task Summary" from the handbook to help them frame the process. There were 6 on the committee, including the chair (a language arts teacher), another language arts teacher, 3 content area teachers outside language arts, and 1 parent from the SBDM Council. At some point, one individual left the Committee. The parent was scheduled to become part of the Committee activities only when it was time to write the report; the chair reviewed the handbook with the parent by phone since that individual was not present at the first meeting. Only one other meeting was held, in which 3 members selected the interviewees. For these meetings and later activities in the study, the Committee met during lunch and after school.

The Steering Committee asked the contact/facilitator to serve as the interviewer and she assented. It was a greater level of involvement than the contact/facilitator had anticipated or wanted, and she felt that the interviews would have been completed even had she not been the interviewer. According to the contact/facilitator, IS5's reason for asking her was that they did not want an outsider; they wanted someone whom they could trust (the contact/facilitator was known to the school from previous professional interaction). Also, they chose the contact/facilitator because she understood the writing program jargon of the interview questions. A parent (not the parent on the Committee) was asked to accompany the contact/facilitator to scribe the interviews. The Committee believed that had the parent been the interviewer, she might have had difficulty with the specialized jargon used in the questions and responses of student interviewees; hence, the Committee asked her to be the scribe instead.

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[19] If the study's start is dated from here, then it took just 4 weeks for the school to complete the study; however, the Steering Committee chair had done some prior initial work, so the study is dated from April 19 when she and administrators first met with the contact person. Also, the chair herself defined the time frame as 6 weeks.

IS5 hoped to include a few grades of its feeder school in the study process. The principal and faculty of the feeder school were initially reluctant. When IS5 apprised the superintendent of the situation, the superintendent explained to the feeder school that the study process was meant to help the schools rather than judge them. The feeder school then agreed to participate. The contact/facilitator reported that once interviews were underway at the feeder school, teachers there were helpful and positive about the process. The Steering Committee chair indicated that the interviewer eventually spoke to teachers of only one of the grades at the feeder school.

According to the Steering Committee chair, the interviewer and scribe spent 1 day at each of the two schools within a 1-week period. They interviewed a total of 4 teachers and 21 students. At IS5, they were able to complete two teacher interviews within 1 hour. They solicited parental permission to interview students. Alternates were interviewed when a county chorus event precluded the participation of some of the original selectees. The student sample included students of varying abilities as intended, according to the Committee chair. Student interviews took less time than expected. The interviewer and scribe began interviewing students on an individual basis, but when they became pressed for time, they switched to each conducting an individual interview simultaneously in the same room. The parent was concerned that students would not respond openly in pair interviews. However, they did eventually conduct one group student interview and reported that it yielded interesting dialogue with no single student dominating the interview. An instructional assistant spent 1½ days typing and compiling student interviews onto 3 separate forms according to grade level; teacher interviews were not typed due to time constraints, but the principal interview was.

IS5 was still in the process of completing the interviews when the first phone interview with the chair took place in late May. According to the chair, the contact had encouraged the Committee to finish step 3 and some of step 4 before the close of the year, but timing was so poor with state testing and portfolio scoring taking place that completion was not feasible. The chair suggested that the fall would have been better for conducting all steps in the study. Yet IS5 did make progress into the first part of step 4, setting priorities, during the summer.

To gather the details of the remainder of the study, a second interview with the chair transpired in July. The Steering Committee had planned to write the report in a group meeting, after testing was completed, near the end of the school year. Ten teachers, including Steering Committee members, from both IS5 and the feeder school were invited to the report-writing meeting; however, none showed up except the chair. The chair attributed the lack of participation to the timing of the study. Therefore, the chair wrote the report herself, spending at least 3 days on it. (However, a feedback form from another participant and the cover sheet to the report both indicated that one other individual contributed a few hours to the report.) The chair described the process of writing the report. She said that the findings were controversial and supported what they already knew. She tried to be careful, not wanting to "point fingers." She found the student and administrator interview responses to be powerful; the administrator responses in particular aided her attempt to not cast blame, in that their answers spoke for her in addressing controversial subjects. The same individual who typed student interviews also typed the report; the time spent is unknown.

The faculty rating meeting was scheduled for a date after the close of school, to involve only faculty of grades focused on in the study (5-8). According to the chairpersons, due to IS5's inability to pay the participants and the study's timing, only two other teachers attended besides the chair. The chair said that the original Steering Committee members were among those who did not attend; therefore, it is unclear whether the two who joined the chair at the rating meeting were other original members or late recruits to the Committee. The group worked from 5-11 p.m. to complete the ratings and write a follow-up report. The chair reported that their dialogue was wonderful, each of them seeing things with the benefit of the others' perspectives. By chance, the superintendent encountered their meeting, and stayed to talk with them for an hour. The chair stated that the superintendent was encouraging and excited about the study, eager to see what results would develop from it in the upcoming school year.

The follow-up report written by the rating group represented preliminary work on setting priorities, which the group intended to use as a "springboard" for discussion among teachers of the certain grades at the two schools the following year. They hoped to present the findings either on opening day or an early release day. They also hoped to be granted regular time for these teachers to work together to align the curriculum; they would seek permission for the teachers to use their release day, 1 day per month for 3-4 months, for this purpose.

While the interviews were still in progress and later, after the rating meeting had occurred, the chairperson discussed her experience of IS5's relationship with the feeder school and her insights about what she thought the study had done to spur improvement to the writing program. She stated that some teachers at the feeder school had not been teaching writing at all because their school's rewards were tied only to the performance of the accountable grade at their own school, but not at all to the subsequent grade levels at IS5. The chair said that the *School Study* was a great thing for IS5 because it displayed in an organized fashion the problem that they were already aware of—inadequate writing instruction at the feeder school to prepare students for IS5. IS5 had broached the issue with the feeder school in the past, yet the feeder school had been reluctant to change the parameters of its writing program. Now, since the data bore out IS5's longstanding beliefs about changes that were needed, the chair felt that she could "build the bridge" with the feeder school because she could refer the faculty to the study's findings rather than criticize them. Based on IS5's experience, the chair feels strongly that the accountability system is flawed because it ties rewards to school buildings instead of grade level sections, hence the previous unwillingness of the feeder school to participate more in-depth in the writing program.

Although priorities were not slated to be finalized until the fall, IS5 acted on the results of the writing study during the summer. They obtained the idea from the blood drive example in a collection of stories in the *School Study* handbook. Based on this idea, IS5 students wrote a community resource book, a newspaper editorial and advertisements, and radio spots to garner support for the local Habitat for Humanity chapter. The Steering Committee chairperson reported that the radio studio welcomed the students; the students read their own ads, which were aired. One of the students lived in a Habitat home; he became a "resident expert" on Habitat procedures, a source of pride for him. The chair said that the students loved this experience.

Half of the $1,500 stipend was allotted to the chair and the other half equally divided among 2 Steering Committee members and the person who did the word processing. The parent interviewer/Committee member participated as a volunteer and did not share in the stipend. It is unknown if the stipend was divided a priori or after the school study was completed based on each participant's contribution; if a priori, it is possible that the difference in allotments had an effect on the levels of (non)participation by various individuals.

Principal and Steering Committee feedback forms from IS5. The principal completed a feedback form. In response to question 1, *whether the school profile was an accurate reflection of IS5's writing program's strengths and weaknesses*, he said yes. In response to question 2, *if the outcome of the study was worth the effort*, he answered the same. In response to question 3, *how the study had benefited or would benefit the school*, he said that it helped them identify their strengths and weaknesses and concentrate their efforts on those areas. In response to question 4, *what were suggestions for improving the School Study process*, he had none, saying that the Steering Committee chair seemed pleased with it.

The chair and the 2 other Steering Committee members who participated in the rating meeting returned a feedback form, the Committee having dwindled from 6 originally. Responses to several of the questions were identical. In response to question 1, *what was the respondent's personal time spent to conduct the study*, the chair said 34 hours, 1 said 6 hours, and 1 said 4 hours. In response to question 2, *which tasks in the School Study required the most time*, all 3 respondents said the rating meeting (4 hours) and 2 mentioned the report as well (10 hours and 2 hours, respectively). One respondent, the chair, also listed coordinating interviews and meeting with feeder school faculty (4 hours).

In response to question 3, *how many Steering Committee meetings were held*, the Committee held 1 organizational meeting prior to the rating meeting. The respondents also listed the rating meeting and a subsequent meeting at which the school profile was completed and findings discussed.

In response to question 4, *at what points in the study did they need to contact someone with questions*, the chair answered (a) when she needed to find out if it was permissible to change the Steering Committee after a member dropped out, and (b) when she needed to know if it was required to fill out a consolidated planning form. The other 2 respondents indicated that they had not needed to, 1 adding that all questions were answered by the chair. To the second part of question 4, *for which tasks did they need more assistance than was available,* no respondents answered.

In answer to question 5, *whether the school profile was an accurate picture of their writing program's strengths and weaknesses*, all 3 respondents said yes. In answer to question 6, *if the outcome of the study was worth the effort*, all 3 said yes, 2 adding that it gave supporting evidence for weaknesses that they already knew existed.

In answer to question 7, *how the study had affected or would affect the school*, all 3 respondents said they hoped to secure administrative support and/or funding to correct their weaknesses. One respondent, the chair, listed three specific changes that they hoped for: (a) hiring of a writing resource teacher; (b) funding for professional development in which teachers from the feeder school and IS5 could align curriculum; and (c) an upgrade to permanent status for IS5's English teaching assistant position.

In answer to question 8, *which parts of the study process were most helpful*, all 3 respondents said (a) student interviews, 1 adding because student comments were "honest and revealing," and (b) the dialogue between them during the rating meeting. One respondent, the chair, also listed communication with the principal.

In answer to question 9, *which parts of the study process were least helpful*, all 3 respondents left the item blank.

Question 10 solicited *suggestions for improvements to the study process*. All 3 respondents suggested conducting the study earlier in the school year, 1 suggesting that the ideal time was the fall. Also, all 3 respondents recommended reorganizing interview questions to more closely match the report form or report questions to more closely match the rating form.

Question 11 asked about *the utility of the sample report as an aid to report writing*. All 3 indicated that they had used it, saying it was helpful. Also, all 3 respondents recommended that the sample have more complete responses to report topics.

Reliability of IS5's report. IS5 submitted 4 teacher interviews, 2 each from IS5 and IS5's feeder school, and two compilations of 21 student interviews, one of 10 students from the feeder school and one of 11 students from IS5.

Three of the 5 report responses were *entirely or approximately equivalent* to the reviewer's sample in accuracy and breadth of data items considered, containing great to good detail adequate for summarizing and characterizing aspects of the writing program. These included most major and minor points, although 1 response contained a misrepresentation. The other two report responses were *partially equivalent*; 1 included some supportive detail but captured no major or minor points for one of the role groups, and 1 captured almost all points but lacked any helpful detail. Although not for these 5 responses, the "Other" space was used in several places elsewhere in the report for recording additional information. In sum, IS5's report was mostly comprehensive and descriptive. The contact person/facilitator's impression of IS5's report was that it reflected the true situation of the school's writing program.

Independent School #6

Description of IS6's study process. IS6 conducted its school study in 9 weeks between March 2 and May 4, 1999. The contact person called the school approximately four times over the course of the study. The Steering Committee chair had no questions during the interviews step, finding the handbook guidelines easy to follow. She had a question regarding the report, which she directed to someone else on the research team. The chair also requested the availability of someone to answer questions on the day of the school's rating meeting.

The Steering Committee chairperson was the assistant principal of curriculum and a writing committee advisory member. There were 5 on the Committee—the chair, 2 teachers, 1 parent, and 1 former student who was studying education. The chairperson had anticipated that the Steering Committee would be larger, but she surmised that other faculty were uninterested in participating. The Committee held 2 planning meetings. The chair made a copy of the *School Study* handbook prior to the first meeting; the group looked through the handbook and "broke it down" conceptually, assigned duties, and set deadlines. The chair commented in a phone interview that the handbook had appeared overwhelming when they first saw it but was not confusing once they began using it; however, she added that the instructions were not very detailed except for step 1.

The Steering Committee members served as the interviewers; the chairperson intentionally assigned them interviewees outside of their grade level and content area "comfort zone" and set 1 month as the time frame for completion. Twelve teachers were interviewed; the sample included teachers from all departments with varying levels of experience and attitudes toward writing. Teacher interviews lasted 1 hour each. The number of student interviews is unknown. An error occurred in the student interviewing process: one of the interviewers distributed the interview form to 3 of the student interviewees to complete as a written survey. These surveys contained many blanks and incorrect responses. The chair was displeased since this was not their intended method. Of the other student interviewees, the chair was unsure whether they were interviewed individually or in groups. The chair was generally disappointed with these interview results as well, inferring that they may have been rushed. The interviews were not typed. Some of the interviews were not performed because one of the Steering Committee members was diverted by a family crisis. According to the chair, interviewing was the most time-consuming task for the Committee.

Committee members worked separately on their report sections within a 1-week time frame. The chairperson stated that the task was "not horrible" once they figured out the approach. An administrative assistant typed the report in approximately 10 hours.

The faculty-wide rating meeting was originally scheduled for April 20, but was postponed due to the aforementioned personal crisis. The Steering Committee had hoped to have all faculty at the meeting; but even by offering professional development hours and a stipend as incentives, it was difficult to persuade them. Only about 1/3 of the faculty attended; moreover, they were not an evenly distributed cross-section of grade levels and content areas. The faculty were divided into small groups when they arrived at the meeting. The rating meeting lasted about 2 hours—quicker than the Committee expected. At first, faculty were slightly confused about the task but understood it once they completed one or two ratings. The chair also reported that they had some trouble with the indicators not matching up between the report and rating form. The session concluded with the rating activity, not progressing to extended discussion about priorities.

The chair mused that it was interesting to see faculty's reactions to some of the data in the report. Namely, some findings illustrated administrators' unfamiliarity with the writing program. Also, the chair added that the principal was surprised about the differences between teachers' and students' perspectives.

The activities of step 4 were assigned to two committees. First they would fall under the jurisdiction of the Writing Committee, which is made up of department heads who plan writing. Then that Committee's recommendations would be forwarded to the Consolidated Planning Committee, representing a cross-section of departments, to complete the writing component of the school plan.

Principal and Steering Committee feedback forms from IS6. The principal completed a feedback form. In response to question 1, *whether the writing program profile was an accurate picture of IS6's program's strengths and weaknesses*, he stated that the school profile was somewhat accurate, suggesting that perhaps more interviews would have helped in this regard. In response to question 2, *if the outcome of the study was worth the effort*, he said yes. In response to question 3, *how the study had benefited or would benefit the school*, he expected that it would help them improve writing across the curriculum. In response to question 4, *what were suggestions for improving the School Study process*, he had no further suggestions for improving the study.

Four of the 5 participants on the Steering Committee returned a feedback form. In response to question 1, *what was the respondent's personal time spent to conduct the study*, 1 spent 40-50 hours, 1 spent 22 hours, 1 spent 15-20 hours, and 1 spent 6-8 hours. In response to question 2, *which tasks in the School Study required the most time*, 3 of the 4 said the interviews, and 1 said preparing and typing the report. Also mentioned were planning and the faculty rating meeting.

In response to question 3, *how many Steering Committee meetings were held*, the Committee held 2 planning meetings: the first for orientation and assigning responsibilities, and the second for reviewing the interviews.

In response to question 4, *at what points in the study did they need to contact someone with questions*, 2 said at the report-writing step, 1 said at the administrator interviews, and 1 did not respond. To the second part of question 4, *for which tasks did they need more assistance than was available*, 1 responded by saying that the assistance provided (for report writing) was adequate.

In answer to question 5, *whether the school profile was an accurate picture of their writing program's strengths and weaknesses*, 2 said yes, 1 said "for the most part," and 1 said no. To the second part of question 5, *what inaccuracies were there and what about the study process may have caused them*, 2 respondents identified the blanks in the student interviews that had been completed as surveys rather than verbal interviews.

In answer to question 6, *if the outcome of the study was worth the effort*, all 4 responded yes, 1 adding that it was interesting from her perspective as an English teacher and 1 saying that it heightened faculty's awareness of the program's strengths and motivation to improve its weaknesses.

In answer to question 7, *how the study had affected or would affect the school*, 2 mentioned heightened faculty awareness and the study's use as a starting point for improvement; 1 respondent identified the study's benefit for curriculum alignment; and 1 hoped the study would influence IS6's focus on writing and the consolidated plan.

In answer to question 8, *which parts of the study process were most helpful*, 1 said understanding others' perceptions of the writing program; 1 said student input and understanding students' perceptions so that she could improve her communication; 1 said both the interviews and report, and the varying, conflicting responses contained in them; and 1 said all parts of the study process.

In answer to question 9, *which parts of the study process were least helpful*, all 4 respondents indicated none.

Question 10 solicited *suggestions for improvements to the study process*. One recommended a year-end review to assess the study's impact on student learning. One respondent suggested correcting the alignment of indicators between the rating guide and rating form. Two respondents had no suggestions.

Question 11 asked about *the utility of the sample report as an aid to report writing*. All 4 respondents indicated that the sample report was helpful and recommended continuing to include it in the *School Study* handbook.

Reliability of IS6's report. IS6 supplied its report but not its interviews to the collaborative research team; therefore, the report could not be examined for reliability. However, an examination of the report showed it to be rather comprehensive, seeming to include major points and detail. Also, the contact person reported that the school's report verified what she knew about the school.

APPENDIX J:

Table of Report Sections and Data

els of All
Schools

Key:
1. D - District administrator interview
2. P - Principal interview
3. T - Teacher composite interview
4. S - Student composite interview

School Study of Writing Instruction
Table of report sections and data reference items (p. 1 of 4)

Report section	Data reference items
1. District Administrative Support (report topic 1A)	**1A** D: 1, 3-5, 7-16 P: 4, 6-8, 10, 13-16, 20, 23 T: 4-5, 10, 12-19
School Administrative Support (report topic 1B)	**1B** P: 1-2, 4-9, 11-12, 14-33 T: 4-6, 9-11, 13-28, 34, 45, 49-50
2. Professional Development (report topics 2A-E)	**2A** T: 15-20 P: 13-21 D: 1, 3-4, 9-12
	2B same as 2A
	2C same as 2A
	2D same as 2A
	2E T: 15, 17, 19 P: 14-17 D: 9
Writing Program Coordination (report topic 3)	**3** D: 7-8 P: 8-12, 27 T: 6, 9-14, 24-25, 30, 46 S: 6-8, 23-25
Focus/Intensity of Writing (report topic 7)	**7** T: 1-5, 9-10, 13-14, 32 S: 4-7, 9-10, 32 P: 1-2, 8-12

School Study of Writing Instruction
Table of report sections and data reference items (p. 2 of 4)

Report section	Data reference items
3. Scoring (report topic 2F)	**2F** D: 13 P: 17-18, 22-26 T: 19, 21-23
Collaboration in Professional Development (report topics 2G-H)	**2G** D: 12 P: 13-14, 21, 27-29 T: 15, 24-27
	2H P: 14, 16, 18-19, 27-29 T: 15, 17, 20, 24-27
School Climate (report topic 4)	**4** P: 1-3, 7, 16, 19-21, 26-28 T: 5-10, 17-18, 20, 22-26 S: 1-2, 4-7, 20, 26-27, 31-34
4. Instructional Strategies I (report topics 8; 9A-E)	**8** T: 45
	9A T: 4, 6-7, 9-11, 13, 30-32, 41, 46 S: 6-8, 19-20, 23-24 P: 1-2, 5-6, 8-9, 11 D: 8
	9B T: 2-7, 9, 13-14, 30-31, 35, 41-42 S: 1-3, 6-8, 14, 19-20, 23-25, 31-33 P: 1-2, 4-8, 11-12, 26 D: 1-5, 7
	9C T: 8 S: 1, 33-34 P: 3 D: 6
	9D S: 1-2, 4-5, 19-20, 25-27, 33-35
	9E T: 10, 14, 32, 47-48 S: 3, 15-16, 23-25, 33 P: 8, 12

School Study of Writing Instruction
Table of report sections and data reference items (p. 3 of 4)

Report section	Data reference items
5. Instructional Strategies II (report topics 10A-D; 11A-C)	**10A** T: 29 S: 1, 3, 8-13, 17, 25, 28, 32-33 **10B** T: 47-48 S: 15-16 **10C** T: 33-34 S: 9-10 **10D** T: 36-37 S: 11-13, 26-28 **11A** T: 43 S: 21-22 **11B** T: 39-40, 42, 50 S: 18-19, 21-22, 30 P: 33 **11C** T: 25, 33, 44
6. Instructional Strategies III (report topics 12; 13A-B; 14A-B)	**12** T: 38 S: 17-19 **13A** T: 41 S: 19-20 **13B** T: 41 S: 19-20, 25-27 **14A** T: 39-40 S: 18-19 **14B** T: 29, 33, 35, 37 S: 11-14, 28, 31-33

School Study of Writing Instruction
Table of report sections and data reference items (p. 4 of 4)

Report section	Data reference items
7. Family & Community Involvement (report topics 5, 6)	5 D: 14 P: 31-32 T: 37, 49 S: 26-29 6 D: 15 P: 33 T: 50 S: 20, 26-27, 30
8. Overall view of the value for students of the writing portfolio program in its current form (report topics 15, 16, 17)	15 T: 1-10, 13-14, 29-32, 36-38, 41-43, 46-48 S: 1-2, 6-8, 11-12, 14-17, 19-22, 31-34 16 S: 1-3, 15, 23-25, 29, 31-34 17 D: refer to other report topics P: refer to other report topics T: refer to other report topics S: refer to other report topics

APPENDIX K:

Table of Observed Score Differences, t-Values, p-Values, and Significance Levels of All Indicators Between the Continuously Improving and Continuously Declining Schools (corrected version to reflect 36 indicators)

Table of Observed Score Differences, t-Values, p-Values, and Significance Levels of All Indicators Between the Continuously Improving and Continuously Declining Schools

Variable Name	Variable Label	Observed Score Diff.	t-Values	p-Values	Significance Level
Q1A	Administrative support--district level	2.165	3.414	.002	Sig. at .01
Q1B	Administrative support--school level	1.929	3.326	.003	Sig. at .01
Q2A	Professional development for writing leaders--building	2.912	5.233	.0001	Sig. at .0001
Q2B	Professional development for writing leaders--district	2.521	4.225	.0001	Sig. at .0001
Q2C	Professional dev. for portfolio accountable teachers	2.310	4.057	.0001	Sig. at .0001
Q2D	Professional development for other teachers	1.943	4.002	.0001	Sig. at .0001
Q2E	Professional development specific to content areas	2.402	4.439	.0001	Sig. at .0001
Q2F	Teacher training and participation in portfolio scoring	1.595	3.165	.004	Sig. at .01
Q2G	Ongoing mentoring/informal professional development	2.736	5.237	.0001	Sig. at .0001
Q2H	Strategic collaboration in professional development	2.350	3.841	.001	Sig. at .001
Q3	Coordination across grade levels and subject areas	2.286	5.459	.0001	Sig. at .0001
Q4	School climate/communication	2.711	5.926	.0001	Sig. at .0001
Q5	Communication with families	1.312	2.604	.017	Sig. at .05
Q6	Use of community resources	3.149	4.696	.001	Sig. at .001
Q7	Focus and intensity of the writing instruction program	2.990	5.827	.0001	Sig. at .0001
Q8	Use of *Writing Portfolio Teacher's Handbook*	1.640	2.780	.010	Sig. at .01
Q9A	Focus on writing vs. portfolios only	2.432	4.408	.0001	Sig. at .0001
Q9B	More challenging work required	2.746	6.961	.0001	Sig. at .0001

Table of Observed Score Differences (continued)

Variable Name	Variable Label	Observed Score Diff.	t-Values	p-Values	Significance Level
Q9C	Student confidence of reaching *proficient*	1.857	2.969	.008	Sig. at .01
Q9D	Student identity as writers	2.390	3.591	.001	Sig. at .001
Q9E	Student opportunity to compare own writings	1.412	2.272	.031	Sig. at .05
Q10A	Student description of writing process steps	2.267	3.953	.001	Sig. at .001
Q10B	Student awareness of portfolio evaluation criteria	1.964	3.667	.002	Sig. at .01
Q10C	Use of computer to facilitate writing	1.412	3.323	.003	Sig. at .01
Q10D	Use of feedback to improve writing	2.357	4.231	.0001	Sig. at .0001
Q11A	Evidence teachers write and share with students	1.120	1.799	.083	Not Sig.
Q11B	Evidence teachers introduce adult life writing	2.632	5.415	.0001	Sig. at .0001
Q11C	Evidence teachers write frequently and independently	2.833	8.872	.0001	Sig. at .0001
Q12	Student choice of topics and format	1.643	3.068	.005	Sig. at .01
Q13A	Student opportunity for real-world writing	2.526	6.003	.0001	Sig. at .000
Q13B	Student awareness of audiences	2.190	4.634	.0001	Sig. at .0001
Q14A	Reading used as a source of ideas	2.462	4.831	.0001	Sig. at .0001
Q14B	Mechanics taught in context of writing	1.344	2.238	.036	Sig. at .05
Q15	Consistency of messages from teachers	2.175	5.094	.0001	Sig. at .0001
Q16	Student awareness that long-term process	1.571	2.632	.014	Sig. at .05
Q17	Consistency among students/teachers/administrators	1.929	3.297	.003	Sig. at .01

Reprinted from Table 1, Coe et al. (1999b), Lewis et al. (1999).

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APPENDIX L:

Completed Citation Form from *The Program Evaluation Standards* (1994)

Checklist for Applying the Standards

To interpret the information provided on this form, the reader needs to refer to the full text of the standards as they appear in Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation, *The Program Evaluation Standards* (1994), Thousand Oaks, CA, Sage.

The Standards were consulted and used as indicated in the table below (check as appropriate):

Descriptor		The Standard was addressed	The Standard was partially addressed	The Standard was not addressed	The Standard was not applicable
U1	Stakeholder Identification	X			
U2	Evaluator Credibility	X			
U3	Information Scope and Selection		X		
U4	Values Identification	X			
U5	Report Clarity	X			
U6	Report Timeliness and Dissemination		X		
U7	Evaluation Impact	X			
F1	Practical Procedures	X			
F2	Political Viability			X	
F3	Cost Effectiveness		X		
P1	Service Orientation	X			
P2	Formal Agreements			X	
P3	Rights of Human Subjects	X			
P4	Human Interactions	X			
P5	Complete and Fair Assessment	X			
P6	Disclosure of Findings	X			
P7	Conflict of Interest	X			
P8	Fiscal Responsibility	X			
A1	Program Documentation	X			
A2	Context Analysis	X			
A3	Described Purposes and Procedures	X			
A4	Defensible Information Sources	X			
A5	Valid Information	X			
A6	Reliable Information	X			
A7	Systematic Information	X			
A8	Analysis of Quantitative Information	X			
A9	Analysis of Qualitative Information	X			
A10	Justified Conclusions	X			
A11	Impartial Reporting	X			
A12	Metaevaluation	X			

The Program Evaluation Standards (1994, Sage) guided the development of this (check one):

____ request for evaluation plan/design/proposal
____ evaluation plan/design/proposal
____ evaluation contract
_X_ evaluation report
____ other: ____________

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